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The roots of racism

Making sense of Bosnia

Protestant workers in N.I.

Cromwell re-assessed;

Why Russia wasn't socialist;

Socialists and War;

Engels vindicated & Genes unravelled

Making

sense of Bosnia

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One of the worst horrors of the modern world is the civil war in former Yugoslavia, which has seen hundreds of thousands of people's lives abruptly thrown into chaos as they have become victims of the conflict, suffering forced emigration or assassination.

At present there seems very little prospect of the war ending, certainly no amount of talks among the leaders has brought peace any closer.

For most people this is a straightforwardly ethnic war - with Serbs, Croats and Bosnian Muslims re-enacting centuries old hatreds in a modern form. But this superficial view doesn't explain why war has broken out now, after decades of Serbs, Croats and Muslims living together in the common state of Yugoslavia. Nor can it really be ascribed to a clash between different cultures: the people fighting speak the same language; wear the same clothes, eat the same food and many of them have intermarried.

The real explanation for the war, like all modern wars, is the logic of capitalism. We live in a world where competition is the driving force of production. Every capitalist company, and capitalist country is striving to defeat its rivals or be defeated. War is the ultimate and most decisive form of competition between rival capitalist countries.

The war in Yugoslavia is a war initiated and conducted by the ruling classes of the former state. Milosevic in Serbia and Tudjman in Croatia are out to obtain the maximum possible territory for their class to rule over.

The two of them were desperate in 1990, when the Yugoslav economy was declining rapidly, whilst working class resistance had led to parliament being besieged the year earlier. To rally support and at the same time to deflect the workers' opposition these former Communists turned to nationalism - making speeches and passing legislation to promote their "own" nations.

The price they paid for such manoeuvres was that as the Yugoslav ruling class split

apart they found themselves racing to obtain as much from the collapse of the old state as they could. And that meant armed conflict accompanied by ethnic cleansing.

Is Bosnia different?

Unfortunately there are no armies in the area fighting for liberation. The Bosnian forces are not defending a multi-cultural, tolerant society, but are equally involved in obtaining territory for a Bosnian ruling class. The main difference between the Bosnian forces and their rivals is that they are weaker.

The Bosnian parliament claims to be multi-ethnic, as it contains Bosnian Serbs

and Croats, but in reality Serbs, Croats and Muslims are all in their own nationalistic parties within the parliament - and are at loggerheads.

Izabegovic, the leader of the Bosnians, is just as much a defender of wealth and privilege as Milosevic and Tudjman. The Bosnian Generals have had no qualms in driving Serbs out from around Srebrenica, and Croats from the Travnik area.

The United States, sometimes via its mouthpiece the United Nations, uses the plight of the Bosnians to consider stepping up intervention in the area. Recently Serbian planes have been shot down, and the

greatest collection of Western air power since the Gulf War is ready to strike from bases in Italy.

The current UN commander General Sir Michael Rose is calling for another 5,000 troops to come to Sarajevo as part of a new plan that involves the partition of Bosnia.

Socialists would oppose any such escalation, and indeed demand the removal of UN forces. We know from the Gulf War and Somalia how their real considerations are not humanitarian but strategic. General Rose's background says it all: he is a former SAS commander; active in Northern Ireland; responsible for the storming of the Iranian Embassy; and Thatcher's right hand man during the Falklands war.

In a desperate attempt to find some solution to the conflict, many people are arguing that Bosnia is the nation that should be supported. Lenin's demand that oppressed nations should be given the "right to self-

The war in former Yugoslavia is a war between three wage-slave-owners, and so long as it remains that way, there is no reason for socialists to champion one side above the others.



Carrying away the dead in Sarajevo

determination" is even cited in defence of this position.

Of course socialists do support equal rights between all nations. In the circumstance of the former Yugoslavia, that means above all, opposing the nationalism of the ruling class. Serbian socialists should support the rights of Bosnians and Croats; Croats of Serbs and Bosnians; and Bosnian Muslims, the equal rights of Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats. The point being to stand out against all nationalist hype in order to strive for the unity of workers across the varying borders.

The slogan of "self-determination for oppressed nations" should not be applied in the region to mean that socialist support Bosnia's military efforts.

As has already been argued, an ambitious capitalist class rules in Bosnia, making the nature of the regime there identical to (but weaker than) its rivals. Support for the Bosnian ruler's plans is particularly misplaced at a time when they seem to be coinciding with the ambitions of American imperialism.

As Lenin pointed out at the time of the First World War, when the Allies justified

their efforts on the grounds of preventing the oppression of Belgium:

"Picture yourself a slave-owner who owned 100 slaves warring against a slave-owner who owned 200 slaves for a more 'just' distribution of slaves. Clearly the application of the term 'defensive war' or 'war for the defence of the fatherland' in such a case would be historically false, and in practice would be sheer deception of the common people, of philistines, of ignorant people, by the same astute slave owners." [Socialism and War, 1915]

The war in former Yugoslavia is a war between three wage-slave-owners, and so long as it remains that way, there is no reason for socialists to champion one side above the others.

The main reason that the left are looking to find a force to support in the area, is that they have become pessimistic about the capacity of ordinary workers to change the course of events there.

But this pessimism is misplaced, as the war continues, inflation is attacking living standards and prompting a considerable number of strikes.

At the same time, the small number of

people making themselves wealthy out of the war is becoming manifestly unjust.

Already a Serbian battalion has been involved in a mutiny during which they took over a village with the support of its inhabitants and arrested the Mayor for speculation.

In Croatia an opposition party is struggling to link up with anti-war movements in the rest of the region [See December 1993 *Socialist Review*], the largest independent Trade Union there has an anti-war position.

War is not a lasting solution for the rulers of former Yugoslavia.

What little control they had over events is lost as all considerations are subordinate to demands of the war. They are caught with no room to manoeuvre between the race of military competition and the growing discontent below them.

At the end of the First World War thrones and Presidencies were lost in a wave of workers' revolutions. The same process can end this war and re-unite a divided population. This prospect is one which would certainly worsen if the UN and Russia were to step up their activities and as a consequence drive workers back behind their rulers.

The roots of racism

Across Europe in recent months racist attacks have escalated dramatically. In Germany and Britain in particular the figures have spiralled and a number of blacks, Asians and other immigrants have been killed in attacks by racist thugs.

For the first time since the 1930's openly fascist groups, preaching race hatred and white superiority have begun to grow significantly.

Racism has begun to encroach more and more on the mainstream of politics as governments keen to deflect anger away from themselves tighten immigration controls and point the finger at immigrants for problems like poverty, unemployment and housing shortages.

The tactic of governments playing the race card has a long and dishonourable tradition that stretches back from the orchestration of anti-Irish backlashes in Britain in the 1860's, through Enoch Powell's famous "rivers of blood" speech in the late sixties, up to the recent speeches by politicians like Margaret Thatcher, Winston Churchill suggesting that without tighter immigration controls British people were about to be "swamped by another culture." In Germany and France leaders like Kohl and Balladur have made similar arguments to justify immigration controls and have further fueled the racism.

Cynical politicians are backed-up by many so-called intellectuals trying to prove that defence of one's "own" nation or culture is something which is inherent and natural in every human being.

Yet for most of human history the idea that human beings belonged to a particular race—that is a particular group which could be defined by a certain unique set of physical characteristics—did not even exist. To an ancient Greek, or a Chinese mandarin, to a Celtic chieftain or a medieval pope, the notion that they were better than other groups because of the colour of their skin or their facial characteristics would have appeared to be so strange as to be completely ludicrous.

Such was the 'race blindness' of most ancient civilisations that it is impossible for us to tell just what race certain leading historical figures were.

For example, Saint Augustine, several Roman emperors, and Hannibal were certainly African and probably black.

But there is other evidence of the unimportance of race in pre-capitalist societies. The Romans, for example, regularly inter-married with the peoples they had conquered. A Roman could quite eas-

ily marry an Anglo-Saxon or a Gaul. Yet in later empires, in the age of capitalist imperialism, the idea of similar marriages was utter anathema to the ruling class. For a British citizen to marry an Indian during the Raj, for example, was to invite social ostracism of the most extreme kind.

Of course most of these civilisations considered themselves superior to the people they held in subjugation. But they did not believe that their superiority lay in their race but in their culture. Thus the Greeks believed that their language lay at the root of their superiority. The ancient Chinese believed that anyone who did not have the Chinese culture was a barbarian. Later in medieval times the Christian religion was the touch-stone of superiority.

The idea of race has always been closely tied to the idea of nationhood. Pre-capitalist peoples were not racist in the modern sense because they did not live in societies where the nation functioned as the primary economic unit. Thus the power bases of the ancient civilisations of Greece and China were cities which

speaking Aramaic, the dominant trading language of the region, rather than Hebrew. Most eventually stopped practising the Jewish religion altogether and converted to Christianity.

In areas where the economic role of the Jews was less central they tended to maintain their distinct culture. But here we sometimes find the phenomena of conversions in the other direction; merchants and traders converting from Christianity to Judaism.

It appears then that the concept of a national culture or a national language in the modern sense just did not exist. The particular characteristics and even the language of a group was a direct reflection of their economic position, not of their race or nationality.

If a nation or race did not exist in the ancient world, did it exist under feudalism? Those who wish to argue that race is not a product of capitalism but a fact in all societies have one seemingly good bit of evidence. In Europe in the middle ages Jews formed both a distinct culture, although dispersed all over Europe, and



Jews fleeing the pogroms in Europe

controlled and dominated the countryside immediately surrounding them. They shared a language and culture with neighbouring cities but were more or less independent of each other in terms of production.

Foreigners who managed to acquire the culture of the civilisation could very quickly become assimilated into the dominant culture.

Thus in Alexandria under the Roman Empire the Jews of the city were essential to trade in one of the great trading posts of the Empire.

Such was their importance to the economy that the Romans actually appointed a Jewish governor of the city. The Jews became assimilated very quickly,

were the victims of some appalling pogroms. But a closer look at the economics of the feudal era, and the distinct role which Jews played within it, tells a different story.

Feudalism was based upon an agricultural economy in which the trading of goods played only a peripheral role. But although commerce and money lending were peripheral they nevertheless became an indispensable part of the feudal political scene.

Yet the dominant ideology of medieval Europe was one designed to justify the dominant mode of production—agriculture on the manors and estates. In order to keep this agriculture supplied with labour, laws were formulated and ideas were

propagated which prevented Christians from engaging in commerce. Thus serfs were forbidden to leave the land, trading was condemned as cheating and usury (money lending) was regarded as a mortal sin.

The Jews of Europe provided all these services and were indispensable to the monarchies of Europe.

Such was the importance of these services that Jews were forcibly prevented from converting to Christianity.

But as feudalism proper broke down and more and more peasants became wage workers, the Jewish moneylenders began to lend to them as well as to the ruling class. It was from this role that the first attacks on the Jews arose. Usually spontaneous, they were the outcry of anger of the poor peasants who, lacking the power or the class consciousness to attack the real enemy, turned on those they saw as the source of their problems—the moneylenders to whom they owed interest.

In a sense these attacks mark the first cracks in feudalism as the dominant social system. By the 15th century, a new and vibrant economic system was emerging in Western Europe, mercantile capitalism. Trade and money lending were ceasing to be peripheral areas of the economy and becoming the harbinger of the future. Some Jews were drawn into this emerging merchant class but most found themselves under attack.

It was in the areas where capitalism began to grow that Jews found themselves persecuted or expelled. Spain, on the threshold of founding its empire in the Americas, expelled its whole Jewish population. The magnificent new German towns of Augsburg and Cologne did likewise. The Jews of Western Europe moved eastward, to countries such as Poland which were nowhere near to beginning the transition to capitalism.

There they continued to play the economic role they had played in Western Europe. It was not until the 18th century, when capitalism began to blossom even in the backward east that wholesale persecution of Jews began there.

As Jews were being persecuted in Western Europe so the people of Africa and the Americas were starting to feel the lash of colonialism. Slavery was re-appearing on the world stage, and with it an ideology which condemned most of the world's population as sub-human.

The story of modern racism begins with this rise of mercantile capitalism. The rush of the emergent European nations to carve out empires, especially in the Americas, meant a new social organisation and a new ideology. In particular it demanded slaves.

It was slavery that led to the development of a fully-fledged racism, not the colour of the people concerned.

Large scale slavery involved total dehumanising of the slaves. Yet just a slavery was booming in the colonies so the new doctrines of human equality were growing up in the heartlands of capitalism.

The idea developed that every man was free and equal before God: only his ability to make money should determine his social position.



Under emerging capitalism, all men were held to be equal before God. In order to justify the important slave trade, black people were to be treated and thought of as an inferior sub-section of humankind.

SLAVES AT SALE
WITHOUT RESERVE.
BY BEARD, CALHOUN & CO.
WILL BE SOLD AT AUCTION ON
TUESDAY, Jan. 16th.

It was under the banner of these ideas that the English and French revolutions took place. But a vast chunk of the wealth which had enabled capitalism to conquer political power had arisen from the sweat of the slaves' brow in colonies stretched around the globe. The slave was not free to accumulate wealth. He was not even free to earn a wage. So how did he fit into the scheme of things?

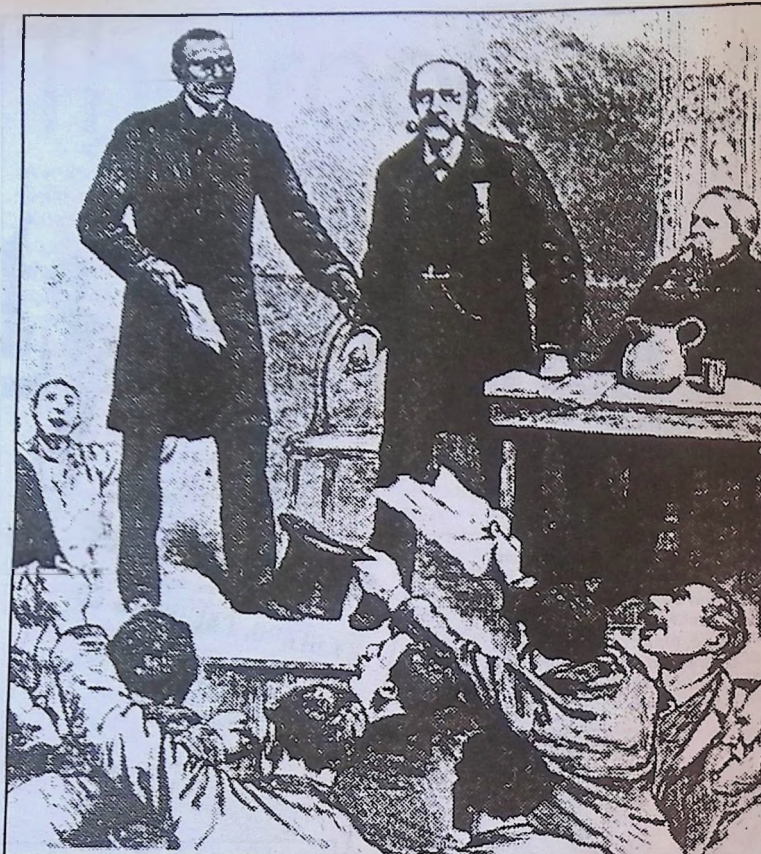
The answer was simple. Black people were to be thought of and treated as if they were an inferior sub-section of human kind.

The laws and customs surrounding this belief did not develop all at once. It was not until the 1680s that European colonists began to refer to themselves as 'white'. Sexual relations between black and white were not outlawed in the American slave state of Maryland until 1692. But the vast hunger for North America and the West Indies for labour meant the use of black slaves steadily increased. By 1720 warriors for the ruling class such as Daniel Defoe could write (in a best selling collection of short stories) of Africans as an 'ignorant ravenous, brutish sort of people.'

The characterisation of whole races as stupid, lazy and brutal more and more became a justification for colonialism. People as 'backward' as the 'coloured races' of the world could not be expected to govern themselves successfully, therefore Europeans must do it for them.

Because the evolution of the economy made slaves unnecessary, it was only in





A black trade unionist addresses the Knights of Labor

the extremely labour intensive agriculture of the southern states of America and the West Indies that slavery persisted.

Like an ever-growing monster racism developed into an ideology of quite monumental absurdity: scientific theories were developed to prove that black blood was different from white blood. By the eighteenth century some scientists were driven to pretending that the negro's bones were black. One Edward Long even claimed that black people carried only black lice.

Such beliefs were not confined to the lunatic fringe. Philosophers such as David Hume could assert that no one of non-European descent had ever contributed to the achievements of civilisation. Awkward individuals such as 'one negro in Jamaica who is reputed to be a man of learning' were dismissed out of hand. Of the Jamaican, Hume had this to say, 'Tis likely he is admired for very slender accomplishments like a parrot who speaks few words plainly.'

Famous scientists who are generally regarded as having swept away the dark ages believed all this rubbish as well. Benjamin Franklin asserted the superiority of the English and the Germans, saying that every other race was 'tawney' in greater or lesser degree and therefore inferior.

The heart of growing capitalism was competition, each nation state caught in a fight to establish the dominance of its

own capital over other capitals.

Empire building was a central component in this process. Every capitalist enterprise expected the protection of its own nation state for its activities abroad. By the nineteenth century the trading companies which had dominated the early colonial adventure, such as the British

East India Company, were being disbanded. The right to order such economic intervention passed into the hands of the state. The capitalist needed the protection of the army should the natives rebel. They needed the bureaucracy of the imperial civil service to provide the infrastructure which would smooth the road to profit making.

Thus nationhood was not just an idea, it was a material reality which became ever more important for ensuring that profits continued to be made abroad.

Nationalism and racism ran hand in hand. The Indian was oppressed and exploited in the interests of an entity called Britain, to which all white British workers were told they belonged. The slaves on the sugar plantations of Haiti and Martinique were shipped to work and sweated to death for the good of France. The economic system born in Europe, capitalism, held dominance over the globe and the European ruling classes fostered the idea that this meant that all Europeans were somehow born to rule.

And the idea of the superiority of the white races of Europe served the ruling class well at home. Capitalism had created a beast which would prove difficult to control, the urban proletariat. The nation would serve as a means to control that beast. Colonialism meant that the workers in London or Paris could feel that they were privileged compared with the dark peoples of the world. Nationhood meant that the ruling class could mask class divisions by stressing the similarities workers and bosses shared.

Of course this type of ideological skulduggery did not always work. In periods of high class struggle, where the class divisions in society were forced right in front of the worker's nose, then ideas of nationhood were pushed into the background as was the flip side of the nationhood coin, the idea of race.

But the role of racism as dividing the working class at home, rather than justifying imperialism abroad was to become more important as capitalism aged.

From the period of imperialism work-



Black Panthers in the United States

ers from the colonial countries have suffered the worst oppression and exploitation. An ideology which propagates the idea that blacks are inferior is used to justify this.

But when labour is needed in times of boom these black workers are moved into the heartlands of the old imperial powers, as happened in Britain in the 1950s. But the shifting of workers around the globe, although it ultimately breaks down cultural differences between workers, does not get rid of racism.

Instead the ruling class attempts to win white workers to the system by telling them they are better than black workers. And, for many backward workers, this idea appears to be true. For as black workers are given the roughest end of the education system, the housing stock, the jobs, their lot is in reality inferior to that of most white workers.

For workers who lack class consciousness it is a small step from this to the belief that blacks are naturally inferior.

A rise in the level of class struggle, because it forces workers to confront the real nature of the system can break these ideas down. It was in the United States, which had a labour force of emancipated slaves to call upon, that racism amongst the working class ran free.

The history of labour struggle in the US is bloody, and nowhere more so than when the bosses chose to use racial divisions to smash resistance.

As early as 1863 Irish immigrants of New York rose up and actually took control of the city for a few days. At the roots of the uprising was the increasingly heavy taxation which workers were having to pay to finance the North in the civil war and the fact that they were being conscripted.

The bosses managed to divert the Irish workers' anger onto the blacks. The Irish were told that their troubles were caused by the struggle to free the black slaves in the South.

The bosses' attempts at division were successful, there was a bloody pogrom against the black workers in New York which resulted in many years of black workers refusing to join with Irish workers to fight a common struggle.

Some white labour leaders did clearly understand the dangers of leaving the black working class unorganised. In 1869 the National Labor Union said, 'Either we shall make them [black workers] our friends or capital will make use of them as a weapon against us.'

But the racism of white workers ran so deep that most were unable to see beyond their hatred of blacks to the real enemy. Black workers were left largely unorganised by the unions and discriminated against by the employers.

Betrayed by the labour movement and discriminated against on the labour market it is hardly surprising that many black workers became strike breakers—they felt no allegiance to the white unions which excluded them from membership and often strike-breaking was their only chance of getting a decent job.

Even labour leaders who claimed to be socialist did not see that they had to actively fight discrimination and racism if they were to attract black workers.

Eugene Debs, the American socialist said: 'We have nothing special to offer the Negro... The Socialist Party is a party of the working class regardless of colour.'

This was arrant utopianism. For the black worker could never forget his colour. It was this which kept him in the unskilled sweated trades, which meant he suffered higher rates of unemployment, which meant he was more, likely to be picked up by the police.

Capitalism didn't treat all workers as equal. Any socialist party which pretended that there were not specific problems for blacks which socialists would have to fight was doomed to remain a white party.

Yet the few attempts which were made to organise black workers showed clearly that they would join trade unions. The Knights of Labour, an organisation which welcomed workers irrespective of creed or colour, had 60,000 black members by 1886.

By the 1920s black organisations, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, were demanding to be allowed to join unions.

It annealed to the American Federation of Labour saying: 'If we allow the formation in America of a powerful bloc of non-unionised black workers, workers who would be entitled to hate the trade union idea, all workers, both black and white will suffer the consequences.'

The AFL, an organisation firmly committed to elitism and business unionism, did not even deign to reply.

It was largely the elitism, one aspect of which was racism, of the AFL which led to the formation of a union federation based on industry not craft, the CIO which threw open its doors to black workers and demanded equal pay for blacks.

Yet the CIO still made that fatal division between politics and economics. Although it would fight for equal pay for equal work inside one factory it rarely challenged the discrimination by the bosses which still kept blacks in the unskilled jobs and the racism within wider society which still denied the sort of education which could open up access to skilled jobs.

Just one terrible result of this failure was seen in the 1960s, when blacks who were prepared to challenge the state such as the Black Panthers, turned to the streets rather than the factories as the terrain of battle and were massacred.

In Europe the post war boom saw mass immigration into the advanced economies of Britain, France, Germany and Switzerland. By the mid-1960s there were 11 million immigrant workers in Europe.

The colour of the immigrants was at most a minor factor in determining how they were treated. Italians in Switzerland, for example, could expect exactly the same sort of petty racialism as Asians in Britain.

The situation was not helped by the attitude of some European trade unions. The Communist-dominated CGT in France argued against immigration right through the 1950s. The trade union federation in Switzerland publicly denounced the government when, in 1970 they gave in to a militant strike of Spanish workers in Geneva.

But, although the idea that immigrants were inferior to indigenous workers was always lurking in the background, the rul-

ing class was anxious to keep organised racism on the margins of politics. After all immigrants were necessary to do the jobs which native workers wouldn't take.

It is only with the onset of recession and mass unemployment that organised racism has begun to grow again, just as the fascists were able to grow in the recession of the '30s.

But the existence of large numbers of immigrant workers has a contradictory effect. On the one hand it makes it easier for the ruling class to blame the immigrants for the problems of unemployment and housing shortages.

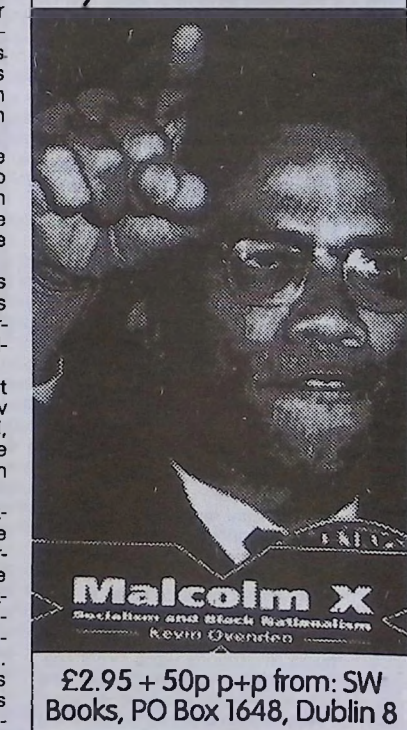
But on the other hand large scale immigration means that increasing numbers of indigenous workers will actually work alongside people of Asian or West Indian descent in Britain, or Algerians in France or Turks in Germany.

This opens up much better possibilities for arguing that racial differences are irrelevant and that what matters is class solidarity, than if immigrants were a tiny ghettoised group who had no contact with the indigenous population.

Even as it uses racialism to divide workers, capitalism has, by the fact that it shifts people around the globe in its intense scramble for profits, opened up new possibilities for destroying the ridiculous notion that skin colour counts for more than class.

□ Ann Rogers

Malcolm X Socialism and Black nationalism by KEVIN OVENDEN



Cromwell, Ireland and the English Revolution

by JOSH CLARKE

THE idea of Oliver Cromwell as a revolutionary isn't very popular especially in Ireland.

More generally many left-wingers fine the traditional marxist notion of a "bourgeois revolution" confusing if not just downright self-contradictory. Indeed looking around the world today there would seem to be no less revolutionary a class than the bourgeoisie. In South Africa where the capitalists own economic interests make the abandonment of formal Apartheid necessary the whole process of change lurches from crisis to crisis as the regime does its damndest to prevent any revolutionary process opening up. In Ireland the political representatives of capital toy with the idea of "modernising" the relationship between church and state only to reel back in horror at the slightest suggestion of popular mobilisation for real change. The 80's saw Reagan and Thatcher trying to turn back the clock in a whole host of areas.

Yet it's important to bear in mind that for most of history of class society—which is in itself a 'recent' development in human history—the ideas represented by Thatcher would have landed anyone holding them in jail as subversive of the status quo. The ideology of the free market and individual effort which is now our main enemy was at a certain period of history—roughly speaking from the late 16th to mid 19th centuries—a liberating force. Nobody can read the *Communist Manifesto* without coming away impressed at the achievements of capitalism in smashing the feudal order. Capitalism removed all the extra-economic ties that had operated to block the development of production in previous class societies, making possible the development of modern industry and most importantly of all a working class that could finally abolish class society.

"The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. Constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones...All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned."

None of this should allow us to forget that bourgeois revolutions were simultaneously about creating a new ruling class. The revolutions made by Cromwell, Robespierre or George Washington were as much aimed at subordinating the oppressed to a new



form of exploitation as they were at kicking the old feudal or slave-owning rulers. The progress brought by capitalism - or indeed by class society as a whole when compared to primitive communist society - has not been without a price in human terms. The machinery whose extensive use capitalism first made possible and which has the potential to make people's lives easier had in Marx's opinion made the worker's lab: or more degrading and exhausting. The period of "Primitive Accumulation of Capital" in which the necessary starting levels of wealth were amassed which made capital accumulation possible was one of human misery in slave colonies (Cromwell was one of the early pioneers of slave plantations when he deported Irish to the West Indies),

the enclosures and savage repression of workers. As Marx wrote of capitalism:

"Has it ever effected a progress without dragging individuals and peoples through blood and dirt, through misery and degradation?"

"[It resembles] that hideous pagan idol, who would not drink the nectar but from the skulls of the slain."

The English revolution of the 1640's shares these two features: it was at one and the same time a great upheaval, a coming to terms with the old feudal order which relied heavily on the pressure of the people from below and a process that could only end in the consolidation of the rule of a new ruling class.

The traditional marxist interpretation of

the English Civil War has always been attacked from the right and in recent years "revisionist" historians have added more ammunition to the anti-marxist critique. As far back as the 40's Tory historian Hugh Trevor-Roper argued that most significant conflict within Stuart England was not between a decadent feudal aristocracy and a progressive capitalist gentry, but rather between "court" and "country." The chief force in the revolution, the Independents, whose chief leader was Cromwell represented not "rising capitalist" gentry but rather the "declining gentry" who rejected the absolute monarchy in favour of localism. In the 70's this theme was taken up and expanded until the English revolution became little more than an avoidable conflict between provincial notables of no socio-economic or ideological significance. The effect is to move attention away from the broad causes of the Civil War in favour of ad hoc explanations which barely take us beyond the intentions of the leading characters.

In reality the roots of the crisis in English society of the 1640's were being laid in the previous centuries in gradual but fundamental changes in the underlying economic base. The exact timing and secondary features of the crisis were of course "unpredictable" but the necessity of a crisis was not. The War of the Roses had ended with a Tudor victory which represented the triumph of the monarchy over local nobles and the consolidation of a central English state. This state leaned on the emerging merchant class in its struggle with the nobility and allowed the rising bourgeois increasing influence in parliament. Mercantile capital in turn began to erode and dissolve feudal England. From being confined to exchange of surplus products produced elsewhere merchant capital increasingly transformed the production of necessities into the production of goods for a market. Money played a greater and greater role.

Yet the merchant class remain dependent on the old ruling class to organise production as a whole and to protect their property. Most merchants still saw entry into the ranks of the nobility as the surest guarantee of survival and security. So although merchant capital undermines feudalism it ultimately remains constrained by the feudal state. This was the cause of England's long-term problems.

Things came to a head with the rule of James I who made peace with Catholic Spain (the main pillar of feudal Europe at the time) and curtailed English expansion in the Americas. This put English merchants at a severe disadvantage versus their main rivals the Dutch. It reflected the limits of a feudal state which didn't share bourgeois requirement for an exclusive claim over an English sphere of colonial interest which could serve as the springboard for primitive accumulation of capital. To make matters worse in contrast to his timid stance abroad James seemed inclined to build up a French-style absolute monarchy at home which could only act as an obstacle to the rise of the bourgeoisie. The ultimate cause of the English Civil War was the fact that Charles showed every sign of continuing these policies of his father's. The English bourgeoisie would have to break the power of the Stuart state as it did in the 1640's and ensure the state shared its priorities if the vital work of carving out new colonies and making war on Spain and Holland were to

be accomplished. Cromwell fulfilled this function by liberating capitalism at home and embarking on the slave trade in Jamaica and elsewhere.

In defending the marxist case historian Christopher Hill has demonstrated how the changes brought about under Commonwealth and Protectorate were both fundamental and irreversible despite the formal return of the monarchy in the person of Charles II in 1660.

The abolition of all feudal forms of tenure (enacted in 1646 but confirmed in 1660) gave landowners absolute property in their estates, freed from arbitrary death duties and dependence on the crown. This made possible long-term planning and capital investment on the land and underpinned the agriculture boom of the late 17th and the 18th centuries. England became a major corn-exporting country. The 1662 Act of Settlement ended the mobile existence of squatters and set the seal on the end of common land which stood in the way of the rule of private property and the creation of a propertyless working-class.

The Commonwealth Navigation Acts created a closed imperial market within which English commercial capital was free as it never had been before to trade. This provided the impetus for the great commercial Revolution proper. Within the closed imperial market thus created English merchants bought colonial goods cheaply and sold them dear. Tonnage passing through London doubled between 1640 and 1680. There was a great increase in the production of consumer goods as America and the colonies opened up new markets. Reflecting this, customs revenue increased tenfold in the century between 1600 and 1700.

The Stuart dynasty had displayed a marked lack of enthusiasm for trade and the colonies. James II doubled taxes on sugar in Barbados and ousted the planters from government so he could sell seats on the Barbados council. Where James and Charles had preferred monopoly traders dependent on their patronage, the new order saw the freeing of trade from arbitrary state interference. After 1688 the monopoly of the Royal African Company was broken leading to a rapid expansion of the slave trade - just one example of the double-edged nature of the new "freedom" to trade.

Taxation mirrored the changes. Monopolies, impositions, arbitrary fines were all removed. Instead new taxes fell hard on the landed interest and the poor, particularly the land tax and the excise - a tax on consumption which encouraged saving and "thrift". This reflected the changed priorities of the state from guaranteeing the consumption of feudal landowners to facilitating the fastest possible growth in accumulated wealth which would fuel the industrial revolution. Soon, with the foundation of the Bank of England a long-term national debt became possible unlike under the Stuarts or in Louis XIV's France as for the first time there was genuine trust between bourgeois taxpayers and "their" state.

One can sum up all these changes by saying that the moneyed interest was no longer a junior partner to the landed. And England which had in the words of one ambassador to Stuart England been a of "little account" became one of the dominant powers of Europe. And her state changed from being weak abroad and overbearing at home to being a major coloniser

abroad and a supporter of "laissez faire" at home. As Hill explains the decisive factor in French failure and Dutch and English success in the global arena was "the difference between the two types of state", between an absolute monarchy and the early bourgeois states forged by revolution.

Nor was the revolution just one of economics. Brian Manning has shown how the intervention of the London crowd was decisive in enabling the most determined leaders of the House of Commons to get their objectives. Pressure from below also forced upon the parliamentary leaders a more radical political and religious programme which was supported by mass risings in many industrial districts against the crown. It was the 'middle sort of people', mainly peasants and craftsmen who provided the backbone of these movements and out of whom was emerging the yeoman farmers and masters who were to become the capitalist class. The most consistent voice of the 'middle sort' was provided by the Levellers between 1646 and 1649 who developed a critique of the old order that went beyond the personality of the king and his court to include complex of class interests embracing king, lords, clergy, lawyers and rich merchants. In its place they hoped to establish a decentralised democracy of small producers in which all heads of household—but not women, servants or beggars—would have the vote.

These views brought the Levellers into head on collision with Cromwell and the Independents who represented the bourgeois proper and led the New Model Army which defeated the king. Cromwell and the Independents played a delicate game of balancing between the conservative Presbyterian majority in Parliament and the "excesses" of the Levellers, at first relying on the latter to purge the House of Commons and to push through the execution of the king and then on them, crushing a series of mutinies and executing ringleaders. Turning on its support in the 'middle sort' in this way undermined the social base of the Independents and prepared the ground for the return of Charles II in 1660.

Despite the later image of the Puritans as dour repressive figures the 1640's witnessed a massive outpouring of free thought and radical ideas under the protection of Cromwell and the radical wing of the gentry and parliament. Between 1640 and 1642 the number of pamphlets published increased from 22 to 1966. The press was released from what one Independent called the "malice of the clergy". The popular appetite for science grew as accessible books were produced which undermined beliefs in "fairies, sprites, witchcraft and enchantments".

In the arts the new ideology of individual worth and development was reflected in the spread of personal diaries or journals, the precursors of the novel proper. The prose style of authors changed from the affected style of the Elizabethans to a plain and straightforward language. Milton himself the great poet and lover of music was a leading Puritan. The main enemies of theatre and drama weren't puritan Puritans but rather the City Fathers of London. The defenders of episcopacy and the Church of England were the main pamphleteers against theatre.

Religious toleration meant that people were free to meet and discuss in the congregations of a myriad of different sects without the supervision of parson or squire.

The economic changes inspired thinkers like William Petty to investigate the science of economics. Petty, said Marx, was "the father of political economy" as well as being a major player in Cromwell's administration.

The Restoration marked a definite end to the political turmoil of the previous decade and saw Cromwell's dead body exhumed from Westminster Abbey and hung on the gallows till sunset as a clear signal to anyone interested in continuing the revolution. On the other hand the return of a Stuart to the crown did not mean a return to the old order in terms of the fundamental relations of economic and political power as the new government had to accept most of the changes. When James II tried to repeat efforts to build an absolutist regime he was overthrown in the Glorious Revolution of 1688 which permanently limited the power of the Crown by parliament.

So where does Ireland fit into this picture? There are two approaches an Irish marxist has to avoid in looking at Cromwell and his impact here. One is to simply repeat everything we learn about him at school, i.e. that he was an evil Englishman who did nothing but murder Catholics and eat babies. In nationalist mythology the struggle between Cromwell and the Catholic Confederacy is the prelude to all later anti-imperialist struggles in which Owen Roe O'Neill plays the role of patriot hero and Cromwell the English aggressor. This simply won't do. In as much as nationalism is a product of capitalism the feudal forces lined up against Cromwell were anything but a national liberation movement and on the contrary represented the most reactionary forces in Europe at the time. The international significance of the English revolution alone should be enough reason for marxists to take sides with Cromwell against the Confederacy. It struck a decisive blow against feudal Europe just at a time when Reformation Germany was under severe strain from the combined might of Catholic Europe.

It doesn't take much effort to undermine the nationalist myths about the Rebellion of 1641.

At the time of the Rebellion the land in Ireland was divided more or less evenly between the Gaelic lords, the Old English lords who had settled in Ireland and gone Catholic and the new English. At first the rising was confined to the Gaels who were interested in recovering their ancient lands but they were soon joined by the Old English who feared the rise of Puritan influence in England would strengthen the hand of those around the king who favoured dispossessing the Catholic lords in Ireland. The English were all—parliament and king—agreed on sending an army to quell the rebellion. The only question was whether Parliament would foot the bill in terms of taxes without demanding some concessions from the king in return and also whether the king would use any army raised against the Irish or against Parliament.

It's important to understand that the Rebellion although formally directed against the English crown was really directed against Parliament and aimed at strengthening the hand of the king - despite the claims of the king to the contrary rumours of contacts between him and the rebels abounded. For the Gaelic chiefs the Rebellion had the triple aims of regaining land, protecting Catholicism against the Puritans and shoring

up the monarchy. For the Old English the defence of the Irish Parliament against interference from London—the actual excuse for participation in the Rebellion—was about preventing the wind of change sweeping the English Parliament from affecting the Irish. They wanted a return to direct rule by the king and an end to the changes introduced by Wentworth which had shifted authority away to the House of Commons.

In reality then the Rebellion coming as it did on the very eve of the English Civil War was the first shot in that war on the Royalist side albeit that Charles distanced himself from it probably thinking it premature. One fact which proves this is that as the king had retreated to Scotland hoping to find support there the Rebellion in Ireland left unmolested the lands of Scots planters despite the fact that they were the main expropriators of Gaelic land. Throughout 1642 the leaders of the Rebellion repeatedly tried to make contact with Charles. Anyone who doubts the Royalist nature of the Rebellion should read the oath the 'rebels' swore:

"...to maintain and defend... the public and free exercise of the true and Catholic Roman religion... I further swear that I will bear faith and allegiance to our sovereign Lord King Charles, his heirs and successors and that I will defend him and them... against all such as shall directly or indirectly endeavour to suppress their

Only after several mutinies in the regiments had been put down and ringleaders been executed was Cromwell able to get the invasion under way.

royal prerogatives, or do any act or acts contrary to regal government."

No wonder that the Old English Lord Ormond—the king's most trusted man in Ireland—could write to him before he had actually thrown in his lot with the Gaels that there were among them "some that bear hears of men and aim not at shaking of your Majesty's government."

The only real force to keep the tribal Gaelic chieftains together - who were purely concerned to preserve their feudal holdings and certainly not in the independence and unity of Ireland - was the presence of the Papal Nuncio Rinuccini. The Vatican and Philip of Spain were busy organising the most reactionary forces in Europe to counter Protestant Germany and En and. Indeed suspicion of the Stuart's zeal in taking on Spain was one of the main causes of the Revolution. Charles had sent a mercenary army of support to the Spanish in the past which included many of the same Gaelic lords who would later find themselves back at Philip's court after the "flight

of the Earls". In 1593 an embassy from certain Irish lords led by the archbishop of Tuam had offered Philip II the kingship of Ireland in return for defending the lands of Catholics. One Old English lord in exile by the name of Stanhurst was even intriguing for the Infanta Isabella to come to the throne in England.

The only time the Gaels and their Nuncio came into conflict with the Old English and the King was when they thought they weren't zealous enough about beating back the bourgeois revolution in England. In April 1648 the Nuncio excommunicated members of the Supreme Council of the Rebellion who had defected to Ormond's command. He denounced the Old English as "Catholics only in name; the ideas they hold are almost the same as those of Henry VIII and Elizabeth."

When it was revealed that the Vatican had sent Hugh O'Neill's sword to Owen there was suspicion that the Vatican was endorsing the O'Neill's claim to the title of High King's of Ireland. But just how far the idea of Irish nationalism was from Owen's mind can be judged by the fact that when in Spring of 1648 he had the Parliamentary forces under Monck penned up in Ulster he offered to defect to Cromwell's side in return for a command in the New Model Army. Even at a cultural level there was no shared identity between Gaelic lords and ordinary peasants. In fact the life of Owen written by O'Clairigh and O'Cianain's account of the Flight of the Earls were both written in a courtly Irish unintelligible to the vast majority.

Although by the time of the Cromwellian expedition to Ireland the Royalist army in England had been defeated the social base of the old order remained entrenched in many areas. Indeed Monck who as we mentioned above was losing to O'Neill and negotiating with him was later to preside over the Restoration of Charles II. In fact the 18 year old Charles II was soon to land in Scotland and there remained Royalist garisons in Barbados, Bermuda, Virginia and Maryland. In June 1649 Charles II had sent his baggage train to Ireland after a plea by Ormond to come and unite the Royalist forces. It can be easily understood how critical for the English Revolution a permanent Royalist base in Ireland would have been with the potential to interdict trade routes to the Americas.

On the other hand in our rush to distance ourselves from nationalism we must not fall into the trap of regarding the Expeditionary army as some great liberator that could drag Ireland kicking and screaming into the capitalist world. To do so would be to apply a very mechanical version of marxism that forgets the dual nature of bourgeois revolutions. As well as safeguarding the English revolution Cromwell's purpose in Ireland was to secure Ireland as a colony for Britain and a source of surplus for the primitive accumulation of capital in Britain.

What did Marx and later marxists actually say on this subject? Marx discusses the role of Cromwell in various letters about Ireland and as usual looks at the question primarily from the angle of its effects on the class struggle in Britain. In one letter he writes as an aside that "the English Republic under Cromwell met shipwreck in Ireland" by which he probably meant that the expedition marked the end of the most radical period in the revolution and the beginning of the political counter-revolution that

would eventually issue in the Restoration.

The expedition served the dual purpose for the leadership in the New Model Army of removing those regiments most infected with the Leveller contagion from England at a time of great political crisis for the regime and of solving the immediate financial obligations of the government to the soldiers and the City. In addition the racist attitudes that inevitably surrounded the expedition could only help divide and disorient the popular movement in England. We know this because the Levellers campaigned hard against any invasion of Ireland, producing many pamphlets which asked quite rightly why the English poor should go to Ireland to help defend the property of the same class of people who exploited both islands. Only after several mutinies in the regiments had been put down and ringleaders been executed was Cromwell able to get the invasion under way. Indeed the day the troops were assembled in Hyde Park ready for embarkation many defied their officers by wearing a green ribbon in solidarity with a murdered agitator who had fought against intervention in Ireland.

Christopher Hill who has done more perhaps than anyone else to defend the notion that Cromwell was a great bourgeois revolutionary (see his "God's Englishman" in particular) argued that the impact of Cromwell on Ireland was not to bring a bourgeois revolution by force of arms. He explicitly contrasts the Irish case with the Scottish (of which more below) which was one of genuine progress. He also contrasts Cromwell's role in Ireland with Napoleon's in Italy and Central Europe which again was to see major upheavals in the feudal relations of production.

One suggestion he gives for the differing role of Napoleon and Cromwell was that thanks to the coincidence of the English Revolution with the Hundred Years War England did not face the same united front of reactionary powers ready to crush the revolution at birth.

It was the need to defend itself against just this from the 1790's on that explains the willingness of the French state to expand the revolution beyond its own borders albeit by relying on force of arms rather than as in France itself on the support of the masses. The English revolution on the other hand was able to pursue a policy of what Hill calls "capitalism in one country".

When England did go to war it was as likely to be against fellow bourgeois and Protestant states (e.g. the Netherlands) as it was with Catholic Spain and did so as in the case of Jamaica not in order to defend or spread a bourgeois revolution from above but rather as part of the competition between rival European states over colonies. England's pursuit of colonies was all the more ruthless in that as a capitalist state she was determined to carry through the process of primitive accumulation. Cromwell's role in Ireland has to be seen in this light. This is the real explanation for the savagery of Cromwell's rule in Ireland and not his own later excuse that "I have been crazy in my health".

In terms of land ownership there was certainly a massive change between pre and post-Cromwellian Ireland but not necessarily in the direction of a capitalist pattern. In 1641 Catholics held some 59% of all land. By 1688 this figure had fallen to 22%. It would be very tempting to argue that as Catholicism was the ideology of feu-

dalism and Protestantism the ideology of the rising capitalist class such a change must have represented a shift towards capitalism. But this would be wrong. Bourgeois revolution and repression of Catholic peasants is not necessarily the same thing.

In fact the treatment meted out to Catholics in Ireland was in marked contrast to that enjoyed by English Catholics under Cromwell where they were more tolerated than they had been under the Stuarts. In the period from 1641-46 i.e. before Cromwell's ascendancy there were 21 priests executed in England and Scotland. Under Cromwell there were only 2 cases and this despite the personal intervention of Cromwell in one case on the side of the priest. In 1657 the Protectorate Parliament brought forward an act to force Catholics in England to swear an oath abjuring the Pope. Cromwell prevented the enforcement of this act in England.

The Puritan revolution was as much directed against the established protestant church in England as it was against Catholicism.



cism, against the rule of the church by Bishops and the clergy's control of church services. Episcopacy and Presbyterianism were just as suspect from the revolutionary point of view as was Catholicism.

Initially Cromwell seemed ready to pursue the same liberal policies in Ireland. In 1649 in his reply to the Catholic Bishops and the leaders of the Rebellion he distinguished between the authors of the rebellion and their tenants who in his eyes were their dupes and promised only to attack the power of the religious leaders:

"As for the people, what thoughts they have in matters of religion in their breasts I cannot reach; but think it my duty, if they walk honestly and peaceably, not to cause them in the least to suffer for the same..."

However he didn't keep his word. The slaughter of 3,500 after the fall of Drogheda was a clear signal that the expedition was about subordinating Ireland the easier to rob it not about liberating it from feudalism. In 1650 the government commissions were instructed to enforce all the old laws against papists. In 1654 the old Elizabethan and Jacobean laws against Catholics were actually revived. In 1657 the Oath of abjuration renouncing the Pope's spiritual and temporal power which as we saw above was resisted by Cromwell in England was rigorously enforced in Ireland. Indeed there was an added stipulation that children must be

taught English and the penalty for not taking the oath was transplantation to Connaught.

The ideological excuse quickly brought forward to justify the failure to implement in Ireland the same liberal norms as operated in England was the racial inferiority of the Irish. The Irish were seen as one backward mass of ignorant papists fit only to be domestic servants in England - Cromwell suggested this as the most fitting fate for the whole race - or slaves in the West Indies. Even the Old English many of whom shared the fate of the Gaels regarded the Irish language as in the words of one "a cancer" and claimed that the barbarous customs of the Gaels had nothing to do with the men of the Pale.

Nor did religious persecution operate to strengthen the development of capitalism in Ireland. On the contrary. One of the great gains of the Revolution in England was the security it gave to the middle-size freeholders who gained absolute rights over their property. The return of the Penal laws in Ireland - which prevented Catholics from buying land or having leases for more than 31 years - meant that the large number of Catholic freeholders were returned to the status of "tenants at will" subject to all the old feudal constraints. This in turn meant that there was no incentive for Irish peasants to shift from pasture farming to more capital intensive arable farming since there was no guarantee that if you saved and invested the land would still be yours by the time the greater yields came on stream. William Petty whom we have already mentioned and was no great friend of the Irish peasant makes the same point: "And why would men endeavour to get estates, where the legislative power is not agreed upon; and where tricks and words destroy natural rights and property?"

Gaelic and Old English landlords were replaced by a largely absentee Protestant Ascendancy who unlike their capitalist counterparts in England saw their holdings mainly as a source of rent and not as valuable investments to be developed. Indeed the lack of any dynamism on the land on a par with the capitalist revolution in English agriculture helps explain the great difficulty in interesting English money in Irish land. This despite the fact that acre for acre Irish land in the 50's was slightly more fertile and up to four times as cheap as English. This explains why the Cromwellian plantation was largely a failure. Although most Catholic land owners were dispossessed and many transplanted in the majority of cases the people who actually worked the land remained largely the same.

This process contrasts quite sharply with the results of Cromwell's rule in Scotland. The 1651 Declaration concerning the settlement of Scotland where the Royalists held out longer than Ireland contained four main clauses. First a guarantee of religious toleration aimed at breaking the hold of the Presbyterian Kirk. Freedom was promised to all who "shall serve and worship God in a Gospel way" a formula wide enough to include just about everyone. Second the formal political union of Scotland and England. This allowed Scotland to benefit from the protection of the Navigation Acts which Ireland as a colony didn't. Third the confiscation of all Royalist land much the same as in Ireland. But fourthly and crucially a concession to the "middle-sort". Since the nobility and gentry had been "the chief Ac-

tors in these invasions and wars against England" and had used feudal rights to force tenants to support them their tenants would be freed from all former dependencies and bondage services.

Moreover they were to be admitted as freeholders on a portion of the confiscated estates under such "easy Rents as might enable them, their Heirs and Posterity to live with a more comfortable subsistence than formerly, and live a free People, delivered (through God's goodness) from their former slaveries, vassalage and oppressions".

The blame for the war was put not on the Scottish nation as a whole but on its social and political leaders.

This contrasts with Ireland where the mass of Irish Catholics were repressed and ironically many old lords and administrators gradually brought back to power, especially after the Restoration.

All this had a marked effect on the trajectories of the economies of the two countries. At the start of the 18th century Ireland probably stood slightly ahead of Scotland economically.

By the middle of the century Scotland was bounding ahead. Ireland suffered famines in 1728-29, and 1740-41 and was on the verge again in 1774. Scotland only came close once in 1782.

Ireland under the Ascendency was as one historian put it "a huge cattle-run diversified only by the miserable villages of potato-growing cotters".

In 1727 an Act was introduced for the compulsory tillage of 5 acres in every 100 of Irish land so dominated was the land by pasture. But even this act soon became a dead letter. Cromwellian settlers found livestock the best investment, the number of cattle actually increasing in the period 1640-60.

There were several government regulations fostering cattle production. By the mid-60's half the annual exports were based on cattle. Scotland by contrast shared the changes in English agriculture. The high-point came in the 1760's with the great Scottish Improvers Movement.

Another indication is the size of the holding and type of rent. Scotland especially in the South east saw the gradual introduction of large commercial and capitalised farms. In Ireland as we know holdings were divided and then divided again.

In Scotland there was a great increase in written agreements after 1650 - important for the tenant who intended to invest in his land - and more and more grain rents were replaced by money rents.

As late as 1853 in Ireland the rent of Cabin and potato patch was still often paid for by the performance of as much as 42 weeks work per annum on the landlord's land.

While in Scotland itself the process of enclosing land and breaking up common lands proceeded apace—culminating in one catch-all piece legislation in 1695—in Ireland the old Gaelic and Scots planters patterns ofcrofting were reinforced by the Ascendency.

While Scottish industry benefited from the Navigation Acts, Irish suffered badly. Exports were dominated by "coarse commodities" like hides, tallow and pipestaves as the wood was needed for plantation homes and shipping. The woollen industry was strangled at birth lest it compete with the English.

Even the introduction of a money economy was hampered by the failure of

the government to regulate the coinage. At a local level trading tokens were often used instead of money, something, which obviously militated against production for trade.

In Ireland the policy after 1649 was to strengthen municipal and guild control of production and to do nothing to increase commercial liberty, the exact opposite of policy in England and Scotland. By 1656 the Merchant Guild of Dublin was allowed to restore its old entry fee of £40.

The structure of judicial institutions serves as a good test of the period. One of the main targets of revolutionary change in England had been the unnecessarily complex system of law and the privileged position of lawyers as the interpreters of legal precedent.

The revolution had aimed at replacing a legal system based on (feudal) custom with one based on (bourgeois) reason and had seen the end of the Star Chamber, High Commission and Court of Wards.

Ireland before the Rebellion had an equally complex legal system based on the Four Courts which overlapped in their jurisdiction and acted as a great retarding influence.

Many of the legal experts who came with the invading army hoped to tear down the old edifice and start from scratch.

One of them, John Cook, got a chance

Cromwell's Expedition was simultaneously an absolutely necessary stage in the struggle to save the English revolution and the end of that revolution, the beginning of a painful history of colonialism

to experiment with new legal procedures in Munster.

However when it came to the serious question of how the colony was to be legally administered the government opted for the old conservative structure of the Four Courts. Indeed many of the old administrators were restored despite their former disloyalty—Ormond himself returned as Lord-Lieutenant after 1660.

Cook was so outraged that when he was offered a position in one of the restored Four Courts he refused, claiming that the ideals of many of those Independents in the New Model Army who had come to Ireland which a reforming mission had been betrayed.

Cook's failure sums up much of what happened to the English revolution in Ireland.

Many officers in the army saw Ireland as a chance to smash an old feudal system and begin again with a "tabula rosa". Never

mind that this always involved - as the Levellers pointed out - a racist and patronising attitude towards the Irish who were to be brought civilisation. But even in their own terms these reforming Independents failed in Ireland.

At a certain point the bourgeois leaders of the Army realised that they had more interest in keeping Ireland down and continuing the robbery of the Irish peasantry as a source of capital accumulation in England than they did in supporting a bourgeois revolution amongst the "middle sort" in Ireland as they had reluctantly done in England itself.

In other words the Cromwellian Expedition was simultaneously an absolutely necessary stage in the struggle to save the English revolution and the end of that revolution, the beginning of a painful history of colonialism.

Today we have to defend the revolutionary importance of the English Civil War and Cromwell while not forgetting that he was a bourgeois revolutionary primarily interested in securing for his own class the "right" to exploit English workers and English colonies.

Why does this argument matter? Why should we bother to defend Cromwell as a bourgeois revolutionary and take his side against the Irish Rebels?

One reason is that on the left, influenced by Republican ideas, if not actually Republicans themselves deny the possibility of a bourgeoisie behaving in a revolutionary way. This has a certain romantic appeal but the result is that when a bourgeoisie does behave in anything approaching revolutionary or even non-constitutional manner then you end up denying it is bourgeois.

So neither Wolfe Tone nor Cromwell were bourgeois revolutionaries. The former because he was "better" than a capitalist (threatening the powers that be with the "men of no property" though even a cursory look at the leaders of the United Irishmen shows them to have been anything but men of no property), the latter because a coloniser couldn't possibly be a revolutionary.

In the same way since the IRA are obviously revolutionary nationalists prepared to smash the existing state of Northern Ireland they can't possibly be guided by bourgeois politics. More generally, the Sandinistas or Fidel Castro or even Mao in his time must all have been non-bourgeois since they all acted in a revolutionary way.

And the revolutions created by these movements and any future "Eire Nua" forged Sinn Fein would have to be post-capitalists/peoples' democracies/deformed workers' states or whatever, in fact anything but capitalist states.

Once we see that a rising capitalist class (of the private or state variety) is capable of acting in a revolutionary way without giving up its right to exploit we can manage to support these struggles against imperialism or feudalism without giving up on the fight for a genuine socialist revolution based on our class the working class.

We'll pay tribute to both Tone and Cromwell as great bourgeois revolutionaries (and we'll stand alongside the Republicans or the ANC) especially when the established capitalists renounce them-as the English bourgeoisie and the inheritors of Cromwell were later to do to the Jacobins. But we won't confuse their revolution with ours.

Myths about the North

Conor Kostick challenges the views of leading theorists Bew, Gibbon and Patterson about Protestant workers

THE main aim of this article is to challenge the analysis of the position of Protestant workers in the writings of Bew, Gibbon and Patterson (BGP).

A summary of their general view of the nature of Unionism in Northern Ireland is presented in the 1980 essay "Some aspects of Nationalism and Socialism in Ireland 1968-78".

At the foundation of the state they argue, the Unionist leaders had three strategic objectives. To prevent Southern control, to retain autonomy from London and to establish unity between social classes.

It was this last aim which has brought about a state very different to that in England. For the Orange rulers needed populism to tie the masses to their leadership.

As a result Northern Ireland is a populist regime which gives autonomy for the state from central bourgeois control.

As evidence for this autonomy they cite the RUC's collaboration with paramilitaries; the inflammatory decisions of the judiciary; and the obtrusive nature of local government.

It is this populism which they believe is the explanation for why the reforming aims of Northern Ireland Prime Ministers O'Neill and Chichester-Clarke failed.

These reforms represented the needs of the general economic trend of modernization and international monopoly capitalism. They ran into the obstacle of populist sectarianism.

The point of this analysis is to shift attention away from what they consider outdated notions of national grievances to a more practical policy for the left.

'Primacy therefore should be given not to advocating "independent Ulster" or "complete integration" solutions but rather to reducing the extent of divisions within the masses themselves.'

Since it is populism which is the obstacle to change in the North, they conclude that the Unionist and British ruling class are not primarily to blame for sectarianism.

The problem of the involvement of the British state in Northern Ireland lies not in its existence but in its specific forms.

Patterson argues that the Unionist bourgeoisie were not the instigators of the shipyard expulsions of 1920.

'[The] local bourgeoisie were happy to see Trade Unions weakened and the left attacked ... but this occurred because of developments over which they had little or no influence.'

The question of the shipyard expulsions will be addressed later, the point is to make clear at the outset that the BGP analysis rests on this notion of populism, which is a phenomena autonomous of the bourgeoisie.

Now it is clear that the Northern Ireland state does have structures uniquely different to those of England. Namely an in-built discrimination against Catholics, and high levels of repression.

However, these structures of discrimination continue to be backed up by the British

The main mistake is to not understand that Unionism poisons the working class movement, to the detriment of all workers.

and Northern Ireland authorities. The Brian Nelson case, and the 1974 Dublin bombings both show the level of collusion between the British army and the loyalist paramilitaries.

It is true that a section of the middle class and lumpen proletariat has been drawn into a vicious sectarianism. BGP are right to say the most militantly Orange sections of the population have been the rural proletariat of the border areas and the lumpen proletariat of the town.

As a result there are tensions between, for example, the DUP and the Ulster Unionists, between the UDA and the RUC. In this sense the analysis of BGP could claim to provide an explanation of this divergence of interests.

Where however their analysis breaks

down completely is when they try to draw Protestant workers into the "Orange Populist" block. BGP argue that the decisive moment was at the time of the shipyard expulsions and the foundations of the state.

A shift in political relations within the Protestant class bloc had taken place. In its anxiety to re-establish a militant basis for resistance to republicanism which could operate independently of the British, the Unionist leadership had been obliged to concede a portion of bourgeois class power to the Orange section of the working class. Having done so they strove to confer institutional and official status to the arrangement. Popular Protestant practices of workplace exclusivism became linked to the efforts of Carson and Craig to reconstitute the UVF and secure British government approval and funds for it and the UULA-based constabularies in Belfast.

The Ulster Unionist Labour Association (UULA) was an attempt to draw workers behind a mainly electoral Orange front. For BGP's claim about Protestant workers being part of Orange populism they need to exaggerate the success of this organisation. For example they uncritically quote Craig's view that the:

"UULA won the "cream" of the working class and so many trade union leaders to Unionism".

In general they view Protestant workers as a force for conservatism not revolution, believing that their actions in no way threaten disintegration of Unionist and Orange ideologies. This is because Protestant workers form a labour aristocracy.

'Of the "metropolitan" changes with which Imperialism was associated, the formation and consolidation of a labour aristocracy had the greatest significance. Mainly in Ulster, but to some extent in the South too, divisions developed and grew more marked between workers employed by the mainly British-orientated largest establishments (the Belfast "big-six", Guinness's etc) and the rest of the proletariat.'

At this point, their argument is fairly clear, and the analysis can be tested against real historical experiences. Something which Patterson attempts to do in his book "Class conflict and sectarianism" and which will be replied to shortly.

However first of all an aside is necessary. For BGP do not present their own argu-

ments so bluntly. In particular, despite the above quote on the Labour aristocracy, they are aware of the problems with the term.

The notion of Protestant workers, particularly the shipyard workers, being a Labour aristocracy with a distinct material stake in the sectarian set-up, is a widespread one.

It is used by writers such as Michael Farrell in such a way as to see Protestant workers as very unlikely to play any revolutionary role until after the link with Britain is broken. As a result he does make concessions to the republican's stages theory.

BGP term Farrell and Eamonn McCann "socialist republicans" because of this position. They are wrong not to make a distinction between the two, as in the first edition of *War in an Irish Town* McCann quite rightly argues that Protestant workers were part of a revolutionary upsurge at time the state was founded, and remain a force for revolution today.

What BGP really want to do is distance themselves from socialists who argue for the immediate withdrawal of the troops, and who have an uncompromising hostility to all forms of Unionism.

They argue for a political strategy "which can work towards the destruction of those political and ideological conditions which have underlain the Northern Ireland state and which, if the British troops were withdrawn tomorrow would create another more reactionary one".⁸

Elsewhere they spell out the same point. "The only realistic alternative to a continued British involvement is a withdrawal leading to repatriation. Even if we felt that the only likely prospect for Northern Ireland was to continue to be ruled as at present, we consider that this would remain a clearly preferable alternative to the terrible reactionary involvement of politics which would result from the emergence of a smaller and homogeneously Protestant state".⁹

Because they associate the "Protestant labour aristocracy" with the troops out position, as well as holding it, they tie themselves in knots by attacking it.

They quite correctly point out that there exists a reformist tradition inside the Northern working class, and it is those Protestant workers often considered the most "aristocratic" who are the backbone of that tradition. They are not the most militant supporters of Orangeism.

The contradiction between their general perception of Protestant workers as being supporters of Orangeism and their attack on Farrell's argument about a privileged Protestant workforce is glaring.

They attempt to escape it by invoking Foster's view of the argument about the aristocracy of labour. Foster attempts to deal with the fact that Lenin's argument that the bourgeoisie buy off a thin crust of workers does not fit the facts.

There is no evidence for the bourgeoisie ever bribing a section of workers, and in fact the skilled workers are usually in the forefront of the fight against the employers.

Lenin was looking for an explanation of the roots of the Labour Party, he was wrong to ascribe it to a privilege section of workers. In fact Social Democratic parties are rooted in the distinct position of the apparatus of trade unions.

In their version, the aristocracy of labour in Northern Ireland is an ideological construction of a specific ruling class strategy which played on historic divisions inside the working class to establish the sectarian state.

This view shows the influence of Althusserianism upon their work (a view which detaches structures more or less entirely from their basis in economic activity). Just as with Foster, it fudges the issue of why workers accept the notion that they are privileged, and to what degree it is in their interests to go along with such views.

Foster himself, unlike BPG, makes a great effort to show empirically the existence of an aristocracy of labour, which he locates as growing up in the 1830s and 1840s. For Foster they were the "pacemakers" of the work process: those workers with the technical skills to transmit the instructions of the employers into the rest of the class.

Again unlike BPG Foster does attempt to answer the question of whether these workers had a more than idealistic interest in their holding of conservative values. He answers "yes" in the form of higher wages. Even with his argument about the 1830s and 1840s there is no evidence that the employers voluntarily gave higher wages to any group of workers. Nor that the whole of the working class didn't benefit from the most skilled section pushing up wage rates.¹¹

Applied to Northern Ireland the argument does not fit at all—which is why BPG do not attempt to base their position on any material facts. The most class conscious workers, the most hostile to the employers, the most likely to be in a trade union and those with the highest pay were the skilled shipyard workers. Their higher pay was a result of their organising against the employer.

Organisation was vitally important in the periods of slump which hit the industry on a cyclical basis. Throughout the period 1902 to 1920 unemployment averaged 6% in the North. In 1903-1905 and 1908-1909 it rose to 20% at the expense of the shipyard engineers.¹²

There is a hidden connection between Farrell's position and BGP's. It is one of pessimism with respect to Protestant workers. Farrell believes in the necessity of arguing for troops out and to challenge the link with Britain but does not believe it is in the immediate interests of Protestant workers to listen.

BGP reject this, from the right! They don't believe in the necessity of raising such issues at all.

A genuinely revolutionary socialist understanding of the question is spelt out in greater depth in Mark Hewitt's pamphlet.



Foster agrees that there is no direct evidence of bribery and economic privilege. However instead of rejecting the whole theory he reconstitutes it as a theory that the ruling class ideologically intervened to remould the working class via the Labour Party.

BGP take up this notion enthusiastically, because it gives them a way of rejecting the "economism" of Farrell whilst clinging onto the general assessment of Protestant workers.

"The significance of this approach is its demonstration that the cluster of forces denoted by the term 'labour aristocracy' no longer existed, and that Marxism had to comprehend the class basis of a new strategy towards the masses."¹⁰

The main mistake both camps make is to not understand that Unionism poisons the working class movement, to the detriment of all workers.¹³

Because there are workers whose real experience convinces them of this, there is always a minority of Protestant workers interested in the argument for revolution. And in times of great convulsions the minority can become significant pointing the way forward to the prospects of a socialist revolution in Ireland.

The main work to apply the analysis of BGP to real historical events is Patterson's *Class consciousness and sectarianism*. In this book he argues against the notion that economic struggles but Northern workers can develop into challenges to sectarianism.

"[There is a] continued unwillingness in the Irish Labour movement to face up to the specific nature and tenacity of Protestant working class Unionism. The idea implicit in much of the existing literature on Belfast's Protestant working class is that such ideologies could be dissipated if the economic class struggle were sufficiently developed."

"Why should the successful unionisation of the unorganised bring about a change in the Unionist and Orange allegiances of the Protestant labour aristocracy?"

Further "Because there has been a tendency amongst writers on this subject to treat the ideologies of Orangeism and Unionism as mere devices designed by, the bourgeoisie to divert the attention of the workers from their 'real' interests, every economic conflict seems to hold out the possibility of workers 'seeing through' the ideologies in question. On the contrary, the evidence suggests that Unionist politicians in no way were clear-headed manipulators of ideology."¹⁴

This last quote shows a deft side-stepping of the argument by Patterson. The main issue is not how clear-headed the Unionist politicians were, but whether economic conflict holds out the possibility of workers breaking from Unionism.

On that question Patterson is wrong. He believes

"Recognition by Protestant workers of a clash of economic class interests with their employers in no way entailed any necessary effect on their relationship to ideologies of religion and nation ... growing trade union militancy at the end of the war allowed many to believe that radical change would occur simply on the basis of the intense conflict at the economic level. The next few years would demonstrate that much more than this would be required if working class unionism was to be shaken."¹⁵

Patterson wants to separate off the economic position of workers from their beliefs. But the existence of sectarianism does have a vital economic impact inside the working class.

The position of a well paid, skilled Protestant worker is not strengthened by them accepting the system of discrimination against Catholics. It is worsened.

One easy way of showing this is to look at average household incomes. In 1989 the average weekly income of Catholic households was £198.55 and £235.10 for Protestant households, a difference of 18%.

The average household income for Britain was £303.84, 23% greater than Protestants.

It is an observable fact that when the most strategic section of the working class, because of their skills, are able to force the employers to concede ground on wages, conditions and rights, the whole of the working class benefits.

Conversely, higher paid workers do not gloat when their lower paid colleague receive a wage cut, as they know that means increased pressure on themselves.

For Marxists, economics and politics are not as separate as Patterson wants to make them. Capitalist relations of production necessarily involve a struggle between the employer and the workforce over the production of surplus value.

This is why Marx devoted so much of "Capital" to the question of wages and the length of the working day.

Sectional disputes over economic issues do not inevitably lead workers to challenge the ideas generally prevalent in society. Nevertheless, it is in the course of such disputes that workers can learn from their own direct experience that oppression of any section damages the need to unite against the employer.

The fact that for most of the time sectarian ideas are widely held in some form or other does not undermine this argument. Nor do the election results which show Protestant workers voting for Unionists.

It the material interests of workers were automatically translated into rejection of the views of the capitalist class, the capitalists would have lost their grip long ago.

The level of class consciousness by workers ebbs and flows, not to the rhythm of elections, but to the crises of the capitalist class and the level of resistance to them.

At all times there exists a minority who reject the values they have been taught, in favour of socialist ones. Just as there exists everywhere a tradition of workers fighting against racism and sexism, so too there exists a tradition amongst Northern workers which is utterly hostile to sectarianism.

At times of truly mass struggles, the minority who are against the existence of sectarianism have the possibility of their views growing rapidly, as they fit with the new experience of thousands. Ultimately the question of a complete and lasting rejection of sectarianism by Protestant workers is connected to the existence of a sizeable revolutionary party in Ireland.

If in Russia of 1917, the centre of anti-semitism, the workers could rise and within the space of nine months of revolution break from that prejudice - electing Trotsky, a Jew, to the Presidency of the Petrograd Soviet and abolishing all laws that discriminated against Jews - then the workers of Belfast have the same potential to unite and smash sectarianism.

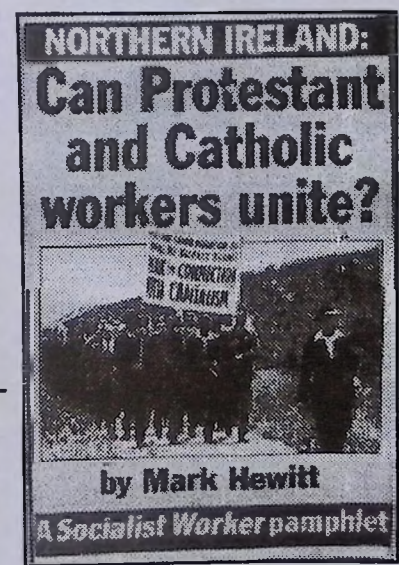
Notes

1. 'Some aspects of Nationalism and Socialism in Ireland 1968-70', in *Ireland: Divided Nation Divided Class*. Ed A Morgan and B Purdie (1980)
2. *The British State and the Ulster Crisis* (BS+UC) Bew and Patterson (1985)
3. *Class Conflict and Sectarianism* (CC+S) Patterson
4. BS+UC
5. *The State and Northern Ireland 1921-1972* (S+NI) (1979)
6. S+NI
7. S+NI
8. S+NI
9. BS+UC
10. S+NI
11. See *International Socialism Journal* 59 for the arguments on Foster. (1993)
12. 'Skilled Workers in the shipbuilding industry 1880-1920', A. Reid in *Divided Nation*
13. *Northern Ireland: Can Protestant and Catholic Workers Unite?* Mark Hewitt (1993)
14. CC+S
15. CC+S
16. Quoted in Hewitt

Can Protestant and Catholic workers unite?

by MARK HEWITT

£1.00 from SWM bookstalls or SW Books, PO Box 1648, Dublin 8



Anthropology, Engels and women's oppression

Engels' book "The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State" (1884) has never been integrated into mainstream sociology and anthropology. His insights into the ways in which societies have changed and can change are ridiculed as being nothing more than vague speculation. However, recent ethnographic research (studies of how people in other societies live) has confirmed the main thrust of Engels' argument, rather than disproving it. The real reason for his rejection appears to be the strong challenge that he poses to the dominant approach of the social sciences to the question of women's oppression. He argues that women have not always been dominated by men: that this is a product of stratification, the private ownership of the means of production and, ultimately, the rise of class society. As a result, full equality between women and men cannot be realised without changing the way in which society is organised. He argues that women's oppression is not a biological imperative, but a supporting prop of capitalist society. The aim of this article is to re-examine this theory in the light of recent evidence.

Many attempts to understand the position of women in society have worked on the assumptions of social darwinism, starting from the belief that subordination of women is inevitable. As this "natural" and "universal" phenomenon is viewed as the product of women's biological make-up, any attempt to alter it must be misguided and pointless. The influence of this approach, which dates from the nineteenth century, should not be underestimated, as it meshes with

the dominant ideology of capitalist society. In its most recent incarnation - sociobiology - it adopts the language of genes and neo-evolutionism, but ultimately reaches the same conclusion as its predecessor a hundred years earlier: society is not to blame for its inequalities. The rich and powerful are in their position to dominance due to their superior genes. In the words of E. O. Wilson, a prominent sociobiologist:

"A key question of human biology is whether there exists a genetic predisposition to enter certain classes and to play a certain role." (1975:554)

If we avoid the question of how women's oppression evolved, explanations which reduce social inequalities to innate characteristics will go unchallenged. The best way to avoid this is to suggest concrete reasons for the emergence and spread of male domination. At the same time, a better understanding of the relationship between private property, the family and the state on the one hand and the social inequalities on the other can help us to identify the changes necessary in order to bring about full equality. Given the lack of historical evidence relating to the earliest human societies, a definitive account of their development will always be impossible. However, by looking at the available archaeological and anthropological data on hunting and gathering societies, it is possible to make some basic assertions with confidence.

Until around 10,000 years ago when people first began to grow crops by planting seeds in ground they had prepared by hand, all human societies relied on hunting and gathering for their subsistence. Basic tools were used to collect vegetable foodstuffs and to hunt

and trap wild game; food was shared widely. These early groups were small in size and moved from place to place as the food resources in one area were exhausted. Their only possessions were a few tools and a small quantity of food. Thus, the means of production were extremely basic, and were equally accessible to all members of the group.

Technological innovations within these early human "bands", such as the invention of projectile weapons and the use of fire, at first called only for a practical division of tasks among their members, which did not give either women or men greater status or power. On the whole, these societies were characterised by egalitarianism, the absence of classes, hierarchies and exploitation, as well as the active involvement of women and men in socially-valued production.

Once hunting with fire-hardened wooden implements became established, a small number of hunters could pursue game over long distances and kill enough to feed a number of other people. In this situation, it tended to be the more convenient for hunters to be males, as this avoided risking potential childbearers or forcing women with young children to leave them behind while following animal tracks. This arrangement would have made sense, particularly as in the absence of animals to provide milk, or utensils in which to store it, children would have been breast-fed up until around age four. A high birth-rate was necessary to ensure the survival of the group, so most women would be pregnant or looking after an infant for most of their adult lives.

Hunting activities and the techniques

involved in skinning animals, preparing the skins for wearing, and making tools used to kill them in the first place became more complicated with the development of projectile weapons. This made it necessary to train boys and girls in the respective male and female tasks they would have to perform later on in life. This gradually led to a formalisation of the sexual division of labour, with men taking principal responsibility for hunting, and women for gathering. It is important to emphasise at this point the significance of women's foraging activities in the hunter-gatherer societies, typically accounting for two-thirds of the total food consumed (Lee, 1968). These activities are wide-ranging, strenuous, involve detailed knowledge of the environment and are valued highly by the community. They are not secondary to women's child-bearing role; in fact women in foraging societies often space their pregnancies so that they do not interfere with their productive role (eg. among the !Kung). In horticultural societies, women are also the main providers of food and clothing. Clearly, the subordination of women and the downgrading of women's activities cannot be explained by referring to the division of tasks in communal societies, which is primarily a social one, determined by the practicalities of life.

All known societies have a division of labour by gender of some description. The actual tasks performed by men and women, and how they are performed, vary widely, and this arrangement can be relatively strict or casual. There are practically no activities performed by men in one society which have not been performed by women somewhere else. The heaviest and most arduous physical labour has been done by women, who, in various situations, have hunted large animals and engaged in warfare (Murdock, 1937). The notion of a "natural" division of labour simply does not take account of this huge variation. It is not the nature of the tasks which constitute female or male responsibilities that is important, but the relations of production within which they are carried out. The sexual division of labour must be seen as part of the totality of social relations existing between men and women, and to understand its origins, we must look at the development of the first human societies.

Many feminist anthropologists have asserted that even in the most basic economies, men's activities have always been valued more highly than women's. They have then set out to identify the "essential" trait which leads to this universal relation of dominance-subordination between the sexes: the fact that women bear children (Firestone, 1971); male aggression (Brownmiller, 1986); the exchange of women by men (Ruben, 1975) or the control of female labour by men (Hartmann, 1986). These writers have been criticised on many grounds, most importantly for their tendency to see certain types of hierarchy, symbolic systems or dichotomies as human universals. Marxists argue against the inevitability of male domination, seeing this as being related to the socio-economic organisation of society, and therefore historically specific. This is sup-

Nevertheless, there are problems with the way in which Engels conceptualises this process. Class society, private property, and the state do not all arise at the same point in time: they are interconnected, yet distinct developments. In attributing male domination to all three, Engels' argument suffers. In addition to this, he states that during the "lower stage of barbarism" (referred to nowadays as 'horticultural' society), the division of labour was a "pure and simple of nature; it existed only between the two sexes". It is clear from this and from his belief that in these societies, both man and woman was "master in his or her own field of activity" that he is attributing the early division of labour to innate differences between the sexes.

The dynamic which Engels identifies as being responsible for the downgrading of women's position is also problematic: "Monogamy arose out of the concentration of considerable wealth in the hands of one person - and that a man - and out of the desire to bequeath the wealth of this man's children..." (The Origins, p.123)

For Engels, the growth of herds created a desire among men to control these herds, and to pass them on to their sons. This led them to impose female monogamy, and to the abandonment of matrilineality and to the confinement of women within the home. When we analyze his argument, the logic behind this drive on the part of men appears more instinctive than thought out. It is necessary to come up with an alternative explanation for the link between private property and women's subordination which does not rely on an innate male drive to leave property to their (male) offspring.

A number of anthropologists have attempted to fill this theoretical gap by proposing new explanations. Eleanor Leacock has played a key role in revising as well as defending Engels, studying in particular the processes by which communal societies have

been transformed through contact with state societies, by way of trade or colonial expansion. She studied the Montagnais-Naskapi Indians of Labrador, and reached the conclusion that foraging societies are necessarily characterised by egalitarian and communal social relations. According to Leacock, male domination resulted from the development of commodity production, which



Women's role in society has changed over time

ported by detailed studies of societies where gender relations have been egalitarian and where women have occupied valued social positions. The data suggest quite clearly that different sexual divisions of labour are associated with different modes of production: relations between the sexes are most egalitarian in the simplest foraging societies and become less so as class society develops.

triggered the emergence of social stratification.

Recent anthropology in the Marxist tradition (eg. Coontz and Henderson, 1986) emphasises the impact of commodity production on egalitarian peoples, but suggests that the change from flexible division of labour to systematic oppression of women derives, in the first place, from the emergence of kin-based property. According to Coontz and Henderson, 'kin corporate' groups (ones made up of men and women related by descent) could have developed gradually out of communal forms of life, and are characterised by the ownership of the means of production by matrilineal or patrilineal groups of kin. New forms of food production, which demanded greater control over the labour power of the group, provided the incentive for the development of this form of organisation. Growing crops and rearing animals necessitated a closer identification of the group with land on which it lived: related groups laid claim to the resources they now needed on a more regular basis.

This change is of great significance for relations between the sexes. To understand why, we need to look at the nature of the situation it gave rise to. 'Kin corporate' societies contain a number of contradictions which create the potential for conflict, the main one being that between the men and the women of the corporate property-owning group and the spouses who join it on getting married: it is thus a tension between 'owners' and 'producers'. For Karen Sacks (1979) this is the defining element of what she sees as a distinct 'mode of production': the way in which 'sisterhood' (which connotes joint ownership of the means of production) is undermined by the marriage relation in this kind of society. However, it is necessary to point out that Sacks' argument holds only in the case of patrilineal kinship systems, where the woman leaves her own kin group and goes to live with her husband's after marriage. We are then forced to ask why it was necessary for women and not men to move away from their own lineage group on marriage?

Coontz and Henderson argue that there is a strong tendency for patrilocality to arise out of the tensions within kin corporate societies, initially either patrilineal or matrilineal, or some variation of these. This tendency arises from the fact that patrilineal societies are potentially more productive than matrilineal ones, due to the greater control they allow over the labour of their members. The reasons for this come from the precise nature of the pre-existing, flexible, division of labour described above. The fact that women's products tended to be the stuff of daily subsistence now takes on a new significance. Patrilineal lineages could incorporate more wives (polygamy), thus expanding their supply of female labour, the key source of wealth. This provided a way of taking advantage of periodic increases

in the supply of goods. According to Coontz and Henderson:

"Because women created a new generation of labourers in addition to contributing their own work, societies in which women moved and multiple wives could be bought in had more potential for long-term, uneven accumulation of labour" (1986:137).

This could create a permanent labour force of women under the control of a man, within a single domestic unit.

It would, however, be a mistake to see the shift to kin corporate property ownership as being instrumental in establishing an oppressive sexual division of labour. These societies need not be oppressive to women, a point made by Engels in relation to the Iroquois. Among the seventeenth century Iroquois, a matrilineal and a matrilocal people, with a developed system of horticulture, there was a balance of authority between the sexes. Men were the chiefs, but they were nominated by women, who could also recall them. Women organised under their own leaders, who were in charge of agricultural labour and household management and who acted as the ultimate arbiters of all decisions about whether or not to go to war. Iroquois husbands lived on their wives' estate, and women held the rights to all the cultivated land. In pre-class society, relations of kin are also relations to the means of production; in Iroquois society, women's membership of a lineage group secured for them a central role in the production and distribution of food, and in making political decisions about the future of the lineage.

The significance of the Iroquois to this argument springs from its matrilineal and matrilineal nature (descent is reckoned through the female line) and its egalitarianism. Matrilineal horticultural societies have not been known to give rise to female domination, but tend to be characterised by equality between women and men. This is because women, as producers of the bulk of subsistence, have less incentive to control their husbands' labour. The core of each Iroquois community was made up of a group of matrilineally-related women and their husbands (who were not directly related to each other). In patrilineal society, on the other hand, where women leave their natal group to get married, they lose their immediate connection with their own kin, and so their claim to its land and cattle. They then become producers of their husband's lineage, without sharing the ownership of its resources. In conjunction with new forms of production requiring a larger pool of labour, and in the context of an existing, flexible division of labour between men and women, the contradictions inherent in this form of society pave the way for social and sexual inequalities to develop.

All lineage societies contain the potential for social inequities, particularly as different groups will always have differential access to resources. Patrilocality

exacerbates this by channelling labour and prestige into a single local lineage. This can happen in the following way: wealthy groups gain in status by feasting others and can pull in more wives, increasing their wealth (even further female labour is central to feasting). In return for goods, other groups begin to pledge their labour, as they cannot reciprocate these gifts. Chiefly hierarchies become established and consolidate their control over the total wealth and labour of the community. This control enables them to transcend the prevailing kin system and to establish a basic kind of class rule.

The spread of agriculture (preparing the ground with a plough drawn by certain domesticated animals) initiated a qualitative shift in the organisation of human societies. In comparison with foraging or horticulture, productivity was high enough to support a layer of non-producers, who were free to pursue other roles, to the benefit of the community. As productivity increased, these benefits were distributed more and more unevenly among the population. The accumulated wealth made possible by settled forms of agriculture also led to a change in relations between different peoples. Whereas before this point, contacts were mainly peaceful and concerned with exchange of goods, war now made sense - if a neighbouring group's surplus could be captured. Not only this, but the need for large pools of labour to work in the fields meant that slavery became a huge source of wealth. With the development of professional armies, all of the conditions are in place for the consolidation of control over the whole of society by a ruling class.

The argument so far hinged around the centrality of control over female labour: the first inequalities within pre-class society were based on the appropriation of women's products by men. From the very beginning, the subordination of women was closely tied in with other forms of social inequality. This suggests that class rule cannot be overthrown without also confronting the structured inequalities between men and women. At the same time, the subordination of women will not come to an end without socialist revolution which destroys its material basis. The origins of women's subordination cannot be explained by the sexual division of labour in communal society, but when this division was combined with social factors like private property and ranking, it became a factor in the emergence of male domination. The rise of the state institutionalised both patriarchy and class rule, undermining kin-based organisation. Women were progressively confined to the domestic sphere, allocated the responsibility for child care and reproductive activities, and rendered totally dependent upon individual men. Thus the evidence from anthropology and history provides no grounds for divorcing the struggle against class rule from the struggle for women's liberation.

Jonathon Patchke

Socialists and War

Aindrias O Cathasaigh



Slaughter in the trenches: World War One

"The experience of the war, like the experiences of every crisis in history, of every great calamity and every sudden turn in human life, stun and break some people, but they enlighten and harden others..."—Lenin, 1915

The twentieth century shows every sign of finishing just as it began: in a continuing wave of war. As the most modern technology brings us the horrors of war as they happen, it is becoming clearer every day that war is not the exception in capitalist society, but the rule. The dilemma that Rosa Luxemburg posed years ago is still before us, sharper than ever: "Either the triumph of imperialism and the destruction of all culture, and, as in ancient Rome, depopulation, desolation, degeneration, a vast cemetery; or, the victory of Socialism, that is, the conscious struggle of the international proletariat against imperialism. Against its methods, against war." The choice between socialism and barbarism directly faces us.

"HATRED AND MURDER, FAMINE AND BLOOD"

In 1901, a young man by the name of Leon Trotsky looked at the world that greeted the new century. What he saw was conflict and war: "Hatred and murder, famine and blood".

Britain was engaged in a bloody war in South Africa, attempting to grab the wealth of the region: the war which gave birth to the concentration camp. But that was only a part of the 'Great Powers' desperate race for colonies: the capitalists of Britain, Germany, France, the United States and elsewhere violently carving up the riches of Africa, Asia and South America between them.

The logical conclusion of this race came in 1914, when the First World War broke out. Apparently, the countries which held half the world as colonies were fighting for the freedom of small nations. In reality, ten million people - at least - were killed to decide which of the two imperialist camps would take the fruits of the international plunder.

Twenty years later came the outbreak of the Second World War. This was supposedly a great people's war to defend democracy from fascism. But when the people of India tried to get a bit of democracy for themselves, they were suppressed; and the

Allies - amongst them Churchill, who never made a secret of his sympathy with Mussolini and Franco - consistently refused to bomb the railway lines to the Nazi death camps. Again, it was a war between two empires, in which 80 million people were killed.

With the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of the war, the Cold War began. A horrific amount of the world's wealth was wasted on arms production, as the US and the USSR defended the 'spheres of influence' they awarded each other in the post-war carve-up of the world. A million and a half people were killed when they came to blows in Korea; and the human race lived under the constant threat of nuclear annihilation.

Later on, America attempted to keep Vietnam under its control: two and a half million people were killed in its attempt to break the heroic national liberation struggle of the Vietnamese people, an attempt that utilised some of the most inhuman methods of warfare ever seen. And tens of millions were killed besides, in the dozens of other wars that took place as part of the Cold War.

Stalinism was overthrown in the popular revolts of a few years back, but it wasn't long before the 'New World Order' showed itself to be every bit as bloody as the old one. More blood was shed, and more of the world's resources were wasted in the Gulf War in order to bring Kuwait's oil back under Western control. Economic crisis has led to Yugoslavia falling apart, leading to a terrible civil war. In Somalia, it is clear that the UN's 'Operation Restore Hope' is only an operation to restore US imperialism's control of the region.

So capitalism has led to one war on top of another: it is a system that lives on war. It is no wonder, therefore, that workers have stood against war in every generation. At the same time, however, there is no escaping the fact that the supposed leaders of the workers' movement have supported, and do support, the warmongers all along the line.

THE GREAT BETRAYAL

As far as the tradition of Social Democracy, of Labourism, is concerned, the history of war is a history of treachery.

During the colonialism of the turn of the century, they usually struck an oppositional pose - although they often went no further than appealing to their rulers to exploit the colonies in a more 'humane' manner; and the likes of Hyndman, who used to openly wish for the success of the British army, could be found in their ranks. Officially, however, they were sworn enemies of militarism. According to a resolution passed at the International Socialist Congress it was their duty in case of war "to utilize the economic and political crisis caused by the war to rouse the people and thereby to hasten the abolition of capitalist class rule".

Fine strong talk, indeed; but talk was all it was. On 4 August 1914, the SPD, Germany's labour party - the jewel of the Second International - unanimously voted for the war budget. Their fellow numbers throughout Europe followed their example: the labour parties humbly capitulated to the war. They gave complete support to their ruling classes, utilising "the economic and political crisis caused by the war" to take part in bourgeois governments, and fulfil their share of mass murder. "What then becomes of all our resolutions; all our protests of fraternisation; all our threats of general strikes; all our carefully-built machinery of internationalism; all our hopes for the future?" asked James Connolly. "Were they all as sound and fury signifying nothing?" When push came to shove, it was glaringly obvious that they were.

When the Second World War came, the labour parties rallied to the cause again. When the 'war for democracy' trampled on democracy; when the 'war against fascism' turned a deaf ear to the victims of fascism,

not a word of opposition was heard from them. And even more tragically, the Communist Parties, too, lined up with the ruling classes. After making a couple of swift about turns to bring their interpretation of the war into line with Stalin's foreign policy, they used their influence to dampen down strikes and other working-class protest, in order to preserve the wartime 'popular front'.

During the Cold War, labour parties once again gave loyal service to their ruling classes. In the case of Korea, of Vietnam, or whatever war imperialism was engaged in to defend its power, they never failed to sacrifice the blood of others for the good of the nation.

And their record is just as shameful at present. The labour parties gave their blessing to the Western troops devastating Iraq for the sake of oil profits. They support the United Nations involvement in the Balkans, and its occupation of Somalia. As well as that, many of the rest of the left have surrendered to the power of Western imperialism: from Halliday to Said to Chomsky, when not supporting it openly, they call on it to act as referee in the world's 'trouble spots'.

The vast majority of the left has collapsed in the face of war. A big gap is making itself felt: and to fill it, it is necessary to break with the tradition of that vast majority, and look to revolutionary socialism.

THE REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST STAND AGAINST WAR

First of all, it has to be understood that war in capitalist society is not a 'mistake', that it does not arise out of some kind of mental aberration on the part of our rulers.

It is still widely thought that ruling classes go to war because they have gone astray: that it would be in their true interest to come together in an organisation like the UN (or a 'democratised' version of it) and jointly rule the world in a peaceful manner. But the capitalist system is based on competition. About

a hundred years ago, as this competition got more and more intense a small number of monopolies started to control the economy; the fate of these companies were progressively more linked with the state; and when they cut across each other, the competition often took the form of war. This stage in the development of capitalism, the Marxists of the time called imperialism.⁶ As long as this system exists it is inevitable that competition will break out into war from time to time: it is impossible to end war without ending capitalism.

Labour's betrayal is no mistake either. The reason for this betrayal is not to be sought in the spinelessness of individual Labour politicians - despite the fact that they usually display just such a characteristic - but in the nature of reformism. According to the social democrats, capitalism cannot be overthrown: all that can be done is to improve bits of it by means of the state. When that same state is at war, therefore, they stand by it. It is impossible to effectively oppose war without breaking with Labourism, without getting rid of its treacherous leadership.

It is sometimes said that socialism doesn't really apply in wartime: that we have to hope for a long-term peace, and then, when the wartime division of the workers is gone, carry on the struggle for socialism. During the First World War, Kautsky - the most prominent theoretician in the socialist movement of the time, claimed that the international solidarity of the workers was essentially a peacetime affair.⁷ But if we were to depend on the capitalists to end the war, it would take them years, thousands more would be killed in the meantime, and the peace they would establish would be a capitalist peace - a peace that would contain the germ of future wars. Also, we would be left defenceless against the attacks the capitalist class makes upon workers' rights, and the huge powers it takes during every war. What kind of socialist postpones socialism 'for the duration', instead of using the opportunity, intensifying the struggle? As Luxemburg wrote "It is a foolish delusion to believe that we need only live through the war, as a rabbit hides under a bush to await the end of a thunderstorm, to trot merrily off in his old accustomed gait when all is over".⁸

Every war leads to a strong feeling in favour of peace: many people are horrified by the slaughter and the bloodshed. Socialists

cannot dismiss this desire at all, and we must be able to involve these people in the anti-war movement. But at the same time, pacifism cannot put an end to war. Firstly, if the fight against the war is not connected to the fight against the capitalists, the force which has the potential to drive war from the face of the earth - the working class - is lost. And secondly, we have to be prepared to use violence if we are to overthrow capitalism - the system that gives rise to war again and again. If the bourgeoisie sheds vast amounts of blood to hold on to part of its profits, and part of its power, what will they do when we take those profits and that power from them altogether? As Connolly put it at the start of the First World War:

"The war of a subject nation for independence, for the right to live out of its own life in its own way may and can be justified as holy and righteous; the war of a subject class to free itself from the debasing conditions of economic and political slavery should at all times choose its own weapons, and hold and esteem all as sacred instruments of righteousness. But the war of nation against nation in the interest of royal freebooters and cosmopolitan thieves is a thing accursed."⁹

"Transform the present imperialist war into civil war—is the only correct proletarian slogan", wrote Lenin when the First World War was only a couple of months old.¹⁰ The duty of socialists in wartime is to use the opportunity of the war to overthrow the ruling class, to turn the war into a class war. When our rulers go to war they take a chance: a political crisis is created, the old certainties are undermined, permanent instability exists—abroad and at home. Socialists have to utilise such a situation to rouse our class against the war, against the ruling class, against the capitalist system that lies at the bottom of it all.

It is impossible to do this without weakening the 'war effort': if socialists take part in strikes during wartime, in protests against the war, our enemies will accuse us of working against 'our' side. And they will be right: as Lenin said, "A revolutionary class in a reactionary war cannot but desire the defeat of its government".¹¹ We cannot fight, at home, against the war without openly saying that we would welcome the defeat of our own government. If we don't, we will not be going further than general condemnation of the war, instead of striking blows

against it, where we are. On top of that, military defeat wounds a ruling class, weakens people's confidence in them, gives a boost to the movement of the workers to throw them out.

A distinction has to be made between two types of war. On the one hand, there are wars like the First World War: a war between two imperialist camps, to decide which of them will take the lion's share of the imperial profits. But on the other hand, there are wars like the Vietnam War: a national liberation war. In this sort of war, our job is still to turn it into a class war, but different tactics are required to do so. In an inter-imperialist war, the defeat of our own side is the lesser evil: we desire that defeat, but that doesn't mean that we desire the victory of the other side. In a national liberation war, however, we are absolutely in favour of the victory of the oppressed people, we want them to break the imperialist power.

This applies also in a case like the Gulf War. Saddam Hussein was by no means a consistent fighter against imperialism: indeed he was just after defeating Iran on America's behalf. But when the United States was attacking Iraq, he was forced to stand against them. The job of socialists was to call for the defeat of the Western troops, so that a blow would be struck against imperialism.

But we don't hide our own politics during a national liberation war. We say that the oppressed people would be better able to defeat imperialism if the working class was in power, if the war was a part of the socialist revolution. We don't keep silent about the crimes of the nationalist leaders: about Ho Chi Minh's attacks on the working people of Vietnam, about his execution of thousands of Trotskyists; or about Saddam's suppression of the workers' movement in Iraq, about his denial of the Kurds' demand for independence. In these cases, imperialism is the main enemy: but it is with the working class of these countries that we stand - it is they, as part of the revolt of the international working class, who have the potential to root out the imperialist system for good.

THE FIGHT IN IRELAND TODAY

The question of war takes on an added importance for socialists in Ireland because our own ruling class wants to take part in the game as well.

The Fianna Fail/Labour Coalition has amended the Defence Acts to allow their army to 'enforce' peace, besides being restricted to 'keeping' it (of course, 'peace enforcement' is the official name for war these days, just as the killings of civilians is called 'collateral damage') and has sent a contingent of soldiers to Somalia. The Irish ruling class intends to play a part in the New World Order, and in the bloodshed under the United Nations flag that goes with it.

The war in Somalia is following a pattern that will become more common in the future, by the looks of it. The UN, with the US in the vanguard, intervenes in a region which is politically unstable. The desperate conditions of the people is used to provide a pretext for the operation, a cover under which Western troops play a colonial role; propping up the interests of imperialism, the political control of imperialism, the New World Order.

The first duty of socialists is to oppose the UN presence. The United Nations is no organisation to preserve world peace: it is only a fig leaf to hide the shame of the United States and its allies as they engage in the military occupation of Somalia, or whatever country they next have in their sights. And especially, we have to oppose the participation of Irish troops. We have to point out that there is no foundation whatsoever for the legend of the peaceableness of 'our boys', that they will kill every bit as mercilessly as any other army.

There is no shortage of so-called 'socialists' who will condemn imperialism in general. Revolutionaries, however must point the finger directly at the Irish ruling class, above all. As Karl Liebknecht, the symbol of socialist resistance to the First World War said while on court martial, "He who does not attack the enemy, imperialism, face to face, but instead attacks those far away, those outside his shooting range... he is no Socialist, but a miserable lackey of the ruling class."¹² Such hypocrisy is foreign to revolutionary socialists. We have to direct specific attention at the outrages that Irish soldiers commit against the people they are keeping down. And we have to welcome any defeat or military loss that 'our' army may suffer: every one will be a kick in the teeth for Reynolds and Spring, a check to their imperial ambitions, and a boost to those of us at home who are trying to get rid of them.

A different kind of war can be seen in the Balkans. As the economic crisis was worsening, and the workers' movement growing, the various sections of the Yugoslav ruling class succeeded in diverting the anger on nationalist lines. Instead of putting the blame where it belonged on the same ruling class, workers began to blame the other nationalities, and Yugoslavia exploded in a three-sided civil war. We must demand the withdrawal of the UN and the ending of sanctions, as they only provide the warmongers with another opportunity to shift the blame from themselves; and not take sides between the different nationalist armies. The only hope lies in a rebirth of the working class movement in the Balkans, in workers unity against the capitalists and their war.

Often it is no easy task for a socialist to stand against war. When an army goes in, allegedly to bring food supplies to starving people, it can be difficult to oppose them. In view of the killing, rape and ethnic cleansing of a seemingly endless civil war, someone who calls for workers unity will be accused of talking nonsense. But if we do face difficulties we are in good company. When Lenin saw the SPD paper announcing their support for the First World War he refused to believe it, he was convinced that it was a police forgery; the story goes that Luxemburg and Clara Zetkin were suicidal on hearing the news.¹³

But the point is that they didn't give in to despair, that they got down to building a socialist movement against the war, in the knowledge that the warmongers wouldn't have everything their own way. Trotsky described the celebrations that accompanied the coming of the war: "But this is only a political delay, a sort of political moratorium. The notes have been extended to a new date, but they will have to be paid."¹⁴ Sooner or later, the bitter truth asserts itself once more: it is seen that the nation is not all in this together, that there are still rich and poor, oppressors and oppressed - and that they are exploiting us. Capitalism is exposed in

its true colours.

Shamed, dishonoured, wading with blood and dripping with filth, thus capitalist society stands. Not as we usually see it, playing the roles of peace and righteousness, of order, of philosophy, of ethics—as a roaring beast, as an orgy of anarchy, as a pestilential breath, devastating culture and humanity—so it appears in all its hideous nakedness.¹⁵

Sometimes, the capitalists' gamble doesn't pay off: when the fightback comes, it can prove fatal for them. It wasn't any peace conference or bourgeois diplomacy that ended the horrors of the First World War, but revolution—in Russia, in Germany, and throughout the world.

Of course, there are no guarantees, we can't be sure if this or that particular war will end in revolution. But the way of revolution, of turning the imperialist war into a class war, is the only road a socialist can travel. "We cannot tell", wrote Lenin, "whether a powerful revolutionary movement will develop immediately after this war, or during it, etc. At any rate, only work in this direction deserves the name of socialist work".¹⁶

At present, scores of wars are going on. Not a day passes without war killing more human beings, ruining more lives, wasting more of the world's resources on the most sophisticated means of murder while thousands starve to death. The price we pay for the continued existence of capitalist society is increasing all the time. Unless we put an end to that society, we and future generations will be condemned to suffer the curse of war even longer. Every bullet, every bomb, every death makes the words of Rosa Luxemburg echo down the years:¹⁷

This madness will not stop, and this bloody nightmare of hell will not cease until the workers... will wake up out of their drunken sleep; will clasp each others' hands in brotherhood and will drown the bestial chorus of war agitators and the hoarse cry of capitalist hyenas with the mighty cry of labour, "Proletarians of all countries, unite!"¹⁷



Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill carve out the world towards the end of World War Two

- 1 Rosa Luxemburg, *The Junius Pamphlet: The Crisis in the German Social Democracy* (Colombo 1992), p.14
- 2 *The Age of Permanent Revolution: A Trotsky Anthology* (ed. Isaac Deutscher, New York 1964), p.4
- 3 See Brian Hanley, 'A war for democracy?', *Socialist Worker*, July 1993
- 4 Tony Cliff, *All Power to the Soviets: Lenin 1914-1917* (London 1985), p.2
- 5 James Connolly, *Collected Works Volume Two* (Dublin 1988), p.39
- 6 See especially Lenin's pamphlet *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. V.I. Lenin *Selected Works Volume V* (London 1938), pp 3-119
- 7 "In Kautsky's rendering, the world-historical appeal of the *Communist Manifesto* has been subjected to a substantial amendment, and now reads: 'Proletarians of all countries, unite in peacetime, but slit one another's throats in war'", as Luxemburg put it. Quoted in Paul Frolich, *Rosa Luxemburg: ideas in action* (London 1972), p.211.
- 8 Luxemburg, op cit, p.9
- 9 Connolly, op cit, p.46
- 10 Lenin, op cit, p.130
- 11 Ibid, p.142
- 12 Karl Liebknecht, *Militarism and Anti-Militarism* (Cambridge 1973), p. xxvii
- 13 Cliff, op cit, pp 2-3
- 14 Leon Trotsky, *My Life: An attempt at an Autobiography* (Hammondsworth 1975), pp 240-241
- 15 Luxemburg, op cit, p 6
- 16 Lenin, op cit, p 220
- 17 Luxemburg, op cit, p 111

The theory of state capitalism

WHEN THE Communist regimes of Russia and Eastern Europe collapsed a few years ago, most of the Left were confused and demoralised.

They had believed these societies were either socialist, "workers' states" or more "progressive" than the West. The Socialist Workers Movement and its sister organisations around the world held that the Communist states were *state capitalist*. We therefore sided unequivocally with those fighting to overthrow these regimes.

Here we reprint an article published first in 1985—before the collapse of Communism—by the Socialist Worker Party in Britain entitled *What do we mean by state capitalism?*

The theory of state capitalism which was first developed to explain the society in Russia has marked us out as a separate political tendency for the last forty years. What is this theory? And is it so important anyway?

Most revolutionaries now accept that Russia is not a 'model' of socialism. The suppression of any independent workers' organisation, the gross inequalities, the oppression of women, gays, national minorities, rule that out. But few agree with us about the existence of 'state capitalism'. These disagreements take us to the heart of our understanding of the centrality of the working class, the nature of the state, and the nature of contemporary capitalism.

The first issue concerns the ruling Russian bureaucracy. The pioneering study of the rise and rule of this bureaucracy was undertaken by Trotsky. We accept his view that the bureaucracy usurped power from

the workers in Russia and that the rise of Stalinism marked a defeat for workers the world over. In Trotsky's words, Stalin was the 'grave digger of the revolution'.

Trotsky recognised that the seizure of power by workers in 1917 had been usurped by the bureaucracy. But he always thought that the state ownership of the means of production was a historic gain, which had to be defended.

Despite the appalling record of the bureaucracy since Trotsky's death, many of his followers still maintain that position. Because there is no private ownership of the basic means of production, the bureaucracy, they argue, cannot be a class. Russia, they argue is still some sort of 'workers' state' simply because the factories, the land, and the economy as a whole, are run by the state.

The argument that there can be a 'workers' state' where workers are totally and systematically excluded from power is strange indeed. To concede this argument would be to move away from our emphasis on the central role of the working class—and we reject it.

We also reject the argument that state ownership precludes the bureaucracy from being a class. It is true that the state rather than individuals own the means of production in Russia. But states are instruments of class rule, they exist to maintain a class as a ruling class. The question is therefore who 'owns' the state?

The American Max Schachtman (then still a marxist) once pointed out that you don't 'own' the state like you own a pair of socks! The issue is one of control, of power, and in Russia that power is held by the bureaucracy. It controls the means of production through state ownership. The lack of private ownership is not crucial.

As long ago as the end of the last century, Engels pointed out that the tendency in capitalism was away from private ownership:

'What does capitalist private production mean then? Production by a single entrepreneur, and that is of course becoming more and more an exception. Capitalist production through limited companies is already no longer private production, but production for the combined account of many people.

For example the government appointed bosses of An Post, Telecom Eireann and CIE do not need to 'own' these companies to act as agents of capitalist class rule. Lenin's definition of class was a 'large group of people that are distinctive by the place they occupy in an historically established system of social production; by their relation towards the means of production'. The Russian bureaucracy collectively share a common 'relation to the means of production'—they are indeed a class, a ruling class.

Even if Russia is a class society why do we call it 'state capitalist'? We must accept that what happens inside Russia is not what Marx describes in Capital. But Capital was not written to describe capitalism but to un-

derstand how it operates, what makes it run, how it changes—its 'dynamic'. The driving force of capitalism is competition. Capitalists, besides their opposition to workers, also oppose other capitalists as competitors. Each, in order to survive as a capitalist, must seek to undercut the prices of the opposition.

If prices are to be cut and a profit made the most efficient methods of production must be used—the latest techniques and machinery. To engage in the 'labour-time' needed to produce a commodity demands investment. Capitalists have no choice but to reinvest their profits, to 'accumulate capital'.

At its most basic capitalism is a society in which competition forces the accumulation of capital. Producing consumer goods for workers must take second place to producing the means of production. As Marx put it in Capital:

'Accumulate, accumulate! That is Moses and the prophets! ... Therefore, save, save, ie reconvert the greatest portion of surplus value, or surplus product into capital! Accumulation for accumulation's sake, production for production's sake.'

The drive to accumulate, and with it the development of new methods of production, means that capitalism has transformed the world. But it has also transformed itself—it is no longer the same as it was in Marx's day. The combination of competition and accumulation means that the most efficient units of capital eliminate their rivals. They turn into giant monopolistic corporations.

The very nature of competition changes. Giant corporations compete not just through cutting prices, but through all sorts of means—the control of raw materials, of sales outlets, advertising, access to government contracts etc. Inside each unit of capital there is planning (witness the development of management 'science', of work study techniques, information technology). But the anarchy of the system as a whole continues.

The growth in the size of capitals has gone hand in hand with the growth of the state. Throughout the twentieth century, state intervention, attempts to control or even 'plan' the national economy have occurred in every country.

In many countries which no one considers to be 'communist', such as Austria and Brazil, the state either owns or controls large chunks of production. Even where there is little nationalisation, as in Japan or the USA, the state through subsidies, tax concessions, or arms contracts plays a major role.

These tendencies within capitalism were identified by Bukharin (a Russian Bolshevik) as long ago as 1915:

'Concentration and centralisation of capital finally brought about the formation of trusts. Competition rose to a still higher stage... There finally comes a time when competition ceases in an entire branch of production.

'But the war for dividing up surplus

value... becomes fiercer... The centralisation process proceeds apace. Combines in industry and banking syndicates unite the entire "national" production, which assumes the form of a company of companies, thus becoming a state capitalist trust.

'Competition reaches the highest, the last conceivable state of development. Competition is reduced to a minimum within the boundaries of 'national' economies only to flare up in colossal proportions between them... The struggle between state capitalist trusts is decided in the first place by the relations between their military forces, for the military power of the country is the last resort of the struggling national groups.'

Ironically, Bukharin's words anticipated what was to happen in Russia itself. It is military competition, the spiralling arms' race, which ties Russia into the global capitalist system. Competition within Russia, like the 'competition' between the different branches of a giant multinational, has been 'reduced to a minimum.'

But Russia is one of a system of states, the bureaucracy has not escaped competition. As with any other national ruling class the defence of 'its' bit of the world system means it cannot run 'its' economy in any way it likes. In order to survive as a ruling class it must develop the latest techniques and heavy industry essential to modern armed forces. It must accumulate in order to ensure competitiveness with its (military) rivals.

All the crucial aspects of capitalism are present: competition forcing accumulation, the development of the means of production taking priority over the needs of workers, workers being exploited through a wages system to provide the surplus for accumulation. Looked at as part of the world economy Russia is bureaucratic state capitalist.

What is only a tendency towards state capitalism within private capitalism took on its fullest form with the rise of the bureaucratic class under Stalin's Russia. The power of private capitalism was broken with the 1917 revolution. But the working class was fatally weakened in the civil war that followed.

Famine forced many workers out of the factories back to their peasant' families, many of the best militants were killed, and others sucked away from their base in the workplaces into the new tasks of administration. Although the civil war was won the Communist Party itself had to uphold the ideas of workers' revolution in the absence of a ruling working class.

Opportunists with no tradition of struggle joined the Party, Stalin increased his hold on the organisational machinery. With the ebbing of the revolutionary tide and the defeat of the German Revolution the Party bureaucracy accepted Stalin's theory of 'Socialism in One Country'. State power rather than workers' power became the key as tasks of 'national' construction seemed more 'realistic' than talk of international revolution.

By 1928 and the First Five Year Plan Trotsky had been defeated. The bureaucracy was able to consolidate its power as a class in the space between a demoralised working class, the remnants of a private capitalist class it then eliminated, and a peasantry herded into collective farms by armed force. (This was a violent social counter-revolution.)



Soviets lost their remaining feeble roots as organs of workers' power. Workers and peasants were to be exploited to provide the surplus for accumulation. The impossibility of the weak economy competing economically on the world market made the building up of military power to defend economic isolation even more important. National survival required an absolute emphasis on the building up of the means of production, and unswerving loyalty and subservience to the state.

Stalin expressed this well:

'To slacken the pace of industrialisation would mean to lag behind; those who lag behind are beaten. We are fifty years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this lag in ten years. Either we do it or we are beaten.'

The years since World War Two have seen bureaucratic state capitalisms established outside Russia. In Eastern Europe the weakness of post-war private capitalism, the material force of the Russian Army and secret police, and the passive acceptance by most workers enabled the 'communist' parties to take power.

In China, Cuba, Vietnam and other places power was taken by petty bourgeois leaderships using peasant struggle and peasant armed forces in the absence of a revolutionary working class, and with an already weak private capitalism. National independence (the importance of which we recognise and support) was used to nationalise the means of production in the quest for economic development. These countries, too, despite the absence of a workers' revolution in any of them; have been called 'workers' states' by some.

The new state capitalisms, have, however, been unable to repeat Russia's successful economic development of the 1930s. The world economy, the world division of labour, has advanced too far since then. The world crisis has forced many of the state capitalist countries to recognise the impossibility of retreating into economic isolation.

Many have looked to loans from abroad; or to concessions to overseas capital as a way out of their difficulties. This has served only to integrate them still more closely into the rhythms of capitalist crisis. The debt problems, attacks on Solidarity in Poland, the contradictions facing post-Mao China, the compromises with the Apartheid regime forced on Mozambique, are clear examples of this.

State capitalism has offered no way forward. Its claim to be socialism has discredited the very idea of socialism in many eyes. Politically the belief that state ownership and national independence are socialism has tied many workers to the programme of the radical petty bourgeoisie. The theory of state capitalism cuts us free from these problems. We reject state capitalism's claim to be socialist and refuse to accept national independence as a sufficient aim for the working class. Instead we are clear that socialism can be built only when workers seize and hold power.

In that seizure of power, which must be international just as capitalism is international, the bureaucratic state capitalist classes as well as the private capitalist classes of the West will be overthrown. They are equally our enemy.

□ Derek Howl



Max Schachtman

The myth of Biological Determinism

reviews "The Doctrine of DNA—Biology as Ideology" by RC Lewontin, Penguin £5.99

For a large part of western history the chief source of popular consciousness about society was tradition and the Christian church.

This was the chief institution of social legitimization.

To reach this position in human society, any institution would have to possess certain features—firstly, any institution would have to appear to exist above normal human life.

Secondly, the ideas and results from the institution's activities must have an unquestionable validity beyond any possibility of human error. And finally, this institution must have a mystical-like quality where its innermost workings are hidden from normal life.

The Catholic Church certainly fitted these requirements in times past and acted as an legitimating agent for an unequal society. So modern science and biology does so today.

For socialists of any kind our society is unfair, uneven, "top heavy" in wealth and status, and is a place where the vast majority have no real control over the conditions of their lives. Lewontin, in his series of published radio lectures which make up the majority of this small volume knows this all too well:

"Some kind of inequality of status, wealth, health and power have been characteristic of every known society. That means that in every known society there has been some form of struggle between those who have and those who have not."

This fact of society presents a major problem—something that must be controlled by our rulers and kept in check.

This is where the idea of "you can't fight city hall" and the commonly held idea that this society is

the best of all possible worlds owes its origin.

Throughout this book the explanation of our society as it is, and must be, forms what is known as "biological determinism" - the set of ideas that claim we differ in ability because of innate difference, those differences being biologically inherited, and that human nature guarantees the formation of a hierarchical society.

It is a reworking of the classical counter argument to the possibility of a socialist society.

Lewontin attacks this system of thought which views the world like a grand clock where all effects have a simple single cause and have single explanation.

This idea of "simple single causes" has been embodied in DNA—deoxyribonucleic acid—a simple human molecule which, our rulers would like us to believe, makes men naturally aggressive, women passive, and people selfish and competitive.

This is the option our rulers take to explain our unfair society the only other being a revolutionally one—an option not in their interest.

The rise of reductionism is closely linked with the rise of modern bourgeoisie and modern industrial capitalism—and a new way of looking at society.

The individual is primary and independent and we are only collections of individuals. From then on "society was thought of as consequence, not the cause of individuals properties".

Modern day pro-capitalist economics rests heavily on the supposed theory of consumer power.

Of course these reductionist views led to the possibility of massive scientific advances in our understanding of our world—the problem being that this viewpoint

is only the *first* step—we have become frozen there, and need to progress further onward to a correct understanding of the process of interaction of internal and external.

The weakness of this view is no more noticeable in biology. It has led to countless attempts to justify the prevailing order in terms of our genes.

The greatest example of this is the Human Genome Project—an attempt to map all the structure of the human gene costing hundreds of millions of dollars—exposing the underlying prejudice of our rulers.

A leading supporter of the project, when asked about the funding levels and if the money would not be better spent on the homeless, gave this chilling reply:

"What people don't understand is that the homeless are impaired ... Indeed no group will benefit more from the application of human genetics".

Arguments to counter these ideas must be an important part of any socialist armoury.

It is vital to understand the behaviour of any organism in terms of the interaction of the whole organism with its environment. To understand anything we *have* to consider the whole and the parts together.

This is not a typical, heavy-going, dry scientific text book but a political account of some issues in modern science. It attacks the ideology of "sociobiology" and contains some great gems of information.

Lewontin believes: "These pages have a political end too, which is to encourage readers not to leave science to the experts ... but to demand a sophisticated scientific understanding in which everyone can share".

We must agree with him.